WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED

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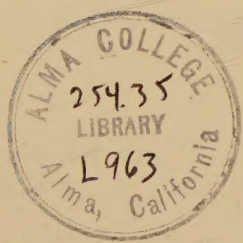
CONSIDERATIONS AND MEDITATIONS FOR BOYS

BY HERBERT LUCAS, S.J.



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PREFATORY NOTE

THE greater number of the addresses contained in this volume were delivered either in the Boys' Chapel or in St Peter's Church, Stonyhurst, during the school year 1906-7. Some of them, however, are of an earlier date (1905-6). The volume is intended as a companion or sequel to those entitled: *In the Morning of Life* and *At the Parting of the Ways;* and it is hoped that, like its predecessors, it may prove useful to others besides schoolboys.

H. L.

FEAST OF OUR LADY'S NATIVITY,
September 8, 1907.

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WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED

I

WE PREACH CHRIST CRUCIFIED*

"For the Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness, but to them that are called . . . Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." —I COR. i. 22-24.

"WE preach Christ crucified," says St Paul, indicating in these words the great central fact of Christianity. The causes, remote and proximate, which through the long ages, nay from the fathomless abyss of God's eternal counsels, led up to the passion and death of Christ our Lord; the mysteries which had the passion and death of Christ for their goal or their starting-point, or which were revealed in and by and through Him whose death upon the cross was the crowning act of His earthly ministry; the prophecies which foretold it, the types which foreshadowed it, the countless and inestimable blessings which have flowed from it; these things make up the very sum and substance of the Christian faith. The passion

* September 23, 1906 (Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost).

and death of Christ was the supreme event to which even the great mystery of the Incarnation itself was in a manner but the prelude; for in the Incarnation, God the Son became Man to save us, but it was by His passion and death that our salvation was actually won and achieved.

"We preach Christ crucified," says the Apostle, affirming or at least implying, thereby, that this central fact of Christianity must also be the leading theme of all Christian teaching, and that one who is in any degree responsible for the religious training of however small a portion of Christ's flock, would at least fall short of a full appreciation of his duty, were he not to put this theme in the very forefront, so to say, of his programme. And accordingly, the commencement of our school year may afford a suitable occasion for the consideration of the text.

Now there are three topics for reflection which lie at the very root of all meditation, formal or informal, on the sacred passion, and to which we may usefully direct our attention just now, viz., (1) the thought of the pain and the humiliation, the suffering, both bodily and mental, which our Lord endured; (2) the remembrance that He endured these sufferings for each one of us individually; and (3) the remembrance of the truth that to Him, as God, these sufferings of His Sacred Humanity are as present as if, in our human way of speaking, He were enduring them now, at this very moment.

And first as to the sufferings themselves. The words: "He was crucified," are so easily and quickly uttered, they can be pronounced—or mumbled, as they sometimes are—in so tiny a fraction of a minute

that they are only too apt to slide over our lips almost unnoticed. But if we will force ourselves to think, if we will set the truth before us, and face it, instead of turning our back upon it, or dismissing it as too troublesome to think about, we can in some measure bring home to ourselves the fact that crucifixion is as terrible and awful a torment as any that can be imagined; and that to be crucified as a common criminal was regarded as the very extreme of disgrace.

"We preach Christ crucified." Do you know what it was to be crucified as our Lord was crucified? To be first inhumanly scourged, to have one's back and shoulders and sides cruelly torn with savage whips—for this, according to the Roman practice, was the usual preliminary to crucifixion; then to be made to carry the instrument of one's own death to the place of execution; then to be stripped and roughly nailed to the gibbet-tree, and with unspeakable pain to be hoisted aloft amid the jeers of a heartless populace; and finally to be left to die a death of slow agony in mid-air, suspended, as it were, by one's own wounds, and racked and tormented by a fierce thirst, as the life-blood drained away; this was a cruel death indeed! And it was a death of which the disgrace was held to be almost more terrible than the pain; for it is the humiliation of the cross to which reference is made in Holy Scripture even more frequently than to the physical suffering involved.

It might indeed have seemed as though our Lord could not have taken any surer way to defeat His own object, and to secure the failure of His own divine mission, than to expose Himself, as He did,

to so painful and (as it was esteemed) so shameful a death. And, as we know, the crucifixion of our Lord was, in fact, contemptuously thrown in the teeth of the first preachers of Christianity. A crucified Messiah! Where are the signs of His power? asked the Jew. Where is the evidence of His wisdom? asked the Greek, proud of his own proud philosophy.

It is a strange, but a most instructive fact, that the earliest representation of the crucifixion which has been preserved down to our own days should be —as it is—a caricature. On one of the walls of what used to be the quarters of the Prætorian guard on the Palatine Hill in Rome, has been found a rude drawing of a man with the head of an ass, fastened to a cross, and before him another man in the attitude of prayer, with the inscription: *'Αλεξάμενος σέβεται σὸν θεόν*—"Alexamenos worships his God." This antique sketch fitly symbolises the sentiments of Roman heathendom towards the Christian religion, their contempt for the incredible folly, as it seemed, of worshipping with divine honour one who in ignominy and shame had died the death of a felon.

And yet: "We preach Christ crucified." We proclaim Him who suffered thus to be our King. We proclaim Him who suffered thus to be our Redeemer. Nay more, we proclaim that He who thus suffered is our God. And we proclaim not only that He who died upon the cross is our King, our Redeemer, our God, but also that by His crucifixion He acquired a new title to our loyalty; so that even if—which is impossible—even if He had not been God, even as Man, having done for each one of

us what no other man has ever done or could do for us, having endured for each one of us what no other man has ever endured on our behalf, having delivered us from evils—if only we will accept the deliverance—from which no other man could have delivered us, and having purchased boons for us which no other man could have put within our reach—that even as Man He is entitled to our fullest and most entire loyalty, and to the dearest love of our hearts.

For the merit and the intention of His sacred passion was not merely distributed, as it were, over the whole human race, as though each were entitled to no more than an infinitesimal portion of them, but they were the fruit and the expression of His love for individual souls. *Dilexit me*, says St Paul, *et tradidit semetipsum pro me*—"He loved *me*, and delivered Himself up for *me*."* Even the saints, who have framed themselves on His model, nay, many men who are far from being saints, but who have learned at least something from their Divine Master, acquire the power of loving each one of a large number of persons just as though there was no one else to love, because they see in each the image of God, and have an intense desire to bring every one of them to the closest union with Him. And so, but in an infinitely higher degree, the love of His Sacred Heart, of which—as has been said—the sufferings and death of our Lord were the expression, is poured out upon each one of us just as if there were no one else in all the world.

For, again, these sufferings of His are to be thought of, not merely or principally as something

* Gal. ii. 20.

long past and gone, but as representing to us the permanent and abiding dispositions of His Sacred Heart, so that if it were on the one hand necessary and on the other hand possible—consistently with the divine wisdom—that He should suffer for any one of us on this very day, He would be as willing now, as He was then, to die for us. But this is, after all, only a crude way of expressing the truth; for to God there are no differences of time, and to Him the passion is ever present.

"We preach Christ crucified." But of course to preach Christ crucified means something more than merely to state these truths. It means, in addition, to draw all manner of practical conclusions therefrom. And to draw these conclusions will be our business, here, during the weeks and months that are to follow. But the first lesson to be learned, and the one on which for the present we may fix our attention, is that we should take pains to bring the passion of our Lord frequently to mind. We are reminded, or should be reminded of it, daily, in Holy Mass, and more especially by our daily Communion. "Do this," our Lord said when He instituted this most Holy Sacrament, "do this in memory of Me."* And St Paul: "As often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink this chalice, ye show forth the death of the Lord, until He come."† Twice a week we are reminded of it when we recite the "Sorrowful Mysteries" of the Rosary, and it is worth our while to make a serious effort to do what we are required to do in order to gain the indulgences attached to the recital of the Rosary, viz., to medi-

* St Luke xxii. 19. † 1 Cor. xi. 26.

tate on the mysteries while the prayers are being said. We are reminded of it again in the devotion of the "Bona Mors," in which we join every month, and in which we two or three times go over in detail the sufferings of Jesus, availing ourselves of them to stir ourselves to contrition, and pleading them on our behalf, and on behalf of all poor sinners, that by virtue of them we may attain for ourselves and others the supreme grace and blessing of a happy death. But even apart from all public prayers, it is most desirable that we should each one of us on our own account seriously cultivate devotion to the sacred passion. It would be an excellent and most laudable practice every night before retiring to rest to say a little prayer before our own crucifix, or better still with our crucifix in our hands, reminding ourselves of the greatness of our Lord's love towards us, and of the malice of sin for which He paid so sore a penalty; and stirring ourselves up to the first beginnings, at least, of that unbounded generosity towards Him, and that unbounded confidence in His mercy, which are two of the chief fruits of sedulous and devout meditation on His sufferings and death.

II

THE VOCATION WHEREIN WE ARE CALLED*

"Brethren, I, a prisoner in the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called."—EPH. iv. 1.†

THE word "vocation," in the text, is used in a sense which is not quite the same with that in which we most commonly employ it among ourselves. The Apostle is here speaking, not of what we call a "vocation" to the priesthood or the religious life, but of the vocation or "calling" which is common to us all, our calling to the Christian faith and religion. Of this calling St Paul "beseeches" or entreats his Ephesian converts to "walk worthily."

And it is to be observed that he addresses this urgent entreaty to them in the character of "a prisoner in the Lord." As some of you may be aware, the Epistles to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon, are called "the Epistles of the captivity," or more accurately, of

* September 30, 1906 (Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost).
† From the Epistle of the day.

"the first captivity," because they were written during those two years of St Paul's imprisonment in Rome of which we read in the concluding verse of the Acts of the Apostles. Now there were, as we know, some among St Paul's fellow-Christians who were ready enough, on occasion, to criticise and find fault with his actions. Was it not open to such men to say that after all he had turned out rather a failure, and that all his missionary enterprises, his undertakings and his ambitions, had come to a most inglorious end? But the Apostle is not in the least ashamed of his imprisonment. On the contrary, throughout the Epistles which have been named he repeatedly mentions or alludes to it, and even alleges it as a special reason why his words should be received with respect, and attentively considered. Although he is in bonds, he says, none the less is he Christ's ambassador to his converts—*legatione fungor in catena;* * and his tribulations are their "glory," † that is to say, something to rejoice at, something to be proud of on his behalf, and by no means a subject of regret or of shame.

Nor is there, after all, anything that should surprise us in this. For St Paul knew very well, and he not unreasonably expected the Ephesians to know, that crosses and humiliations, especially when they come to a man as the result of his zeal in God's service, so far from being a sign of the divine displeasure, are on the contrary the appointed means by which God brings about the fulfilment of His purposes. And could he have foreseen the course of ages yet to come, he would have recognised

* Eph. vi. 20. † Eph. iii. 13.

in detail the truth which he must have already presaged at least vaguely and in general, that the whole history of the Church was to be, like that of her Divine Founder, a history of triumph through failure; of real triumph through apparent failure; of triumph in God's eyes through failure in the eyes of men; and that the prospects of God's cause in the world are really brightest, not when the faithful and their pastors are in the enjoyment of all manner of ease and comfort, but rather when they are tried by many tribulations. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, no less plainly than St Paul, that in prosperity rather than in adversity, in wealth far more than in poverty, lies the danger of our unfaithfulness to Christian ideals.

So much, then, concerning the circumstances under which the Apostle wrote the letter from which the text is taken, and concerning the light in which he viewed those circumstances. And now we have to consider the substance of his entreaty, which is that his converts would walk "worthy of their calling," and this entreaty we may forthwith apply to the conditions of our own lives here at school.

Who, then, is it that has called us? And to what have we been called? He who has called us is no other than Jesus Christ crucified, whose sufferings and death on our behalf ought, as has been said, to be at all times a leading theme of meditation for every one of us. Do not forget that it is *Christ crucified* who has called us. We are summoned daily to our Christian warfare not simply by the dictates of reason and self-interest, though reason and self-interest may well be invoked in favour of all

that we are required to do; nor again simply under threat of God's terrible punishments, though it is never safe to lose sight altogether of that motive of holy fear which is the very beginning of wisdom; but we are called with a call of measureless love; that love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which constrained Him to pour out His life-blood for our redemption.

And to what has he called us? He has called us to fight under the standard of His cross. He has called us, in some measure at least, to imitate and to resemble Himself. Not, indeed, to endure the scourging, and the crowning with thorns, and the driving of nails through hands and feet, which He endured for us. Happy indeed, thrice happy, should we be, if we were counted worthy, like the Apostles, to suffer persecution and stripes, nay even death itself, for the name of Jesus. But these things being out of our immediate reach, it may be more profitable to turn our attention to what lies within the scope of our present efforts and aspirations.

He has called us to exercise at least that measure of painful and persevering self-control and self-denial which is needed for resistance to temptation, for the avoidance of deliberate sin, whether mortal or venial, and for the resolute shunning of the avoidable occasions of sin. He has called each one of us to bear the burden and to face the difficulties which are involved in the faithful and conscientious discharge of the duties of our state of life—not forgetting that, however brilliant our future prospects may be, just at present our state of life is that of schoolboys living under obedience to our lawful superiors. And

indeed obedience and respect for lawful authority is one of the chief lessons taught us by the example of Him who was "made obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross";* and who, though He was—as St Paul reminds us—the Eternal Wisdom of God, yet deigned, as Man, to learn the lesson of obedience in the experimental school of suffering—*Didicit, ex iis quæ passus est, obedientiam.*† He calls upon each one of us to exercise such a measure of self-denial as will enable us, even in early youth, to give our modicum of alms, and so to prepare ourselves hereafter to exercise the virtue of Christian charity on a larger scale and in a more active fashion. So much at least is included in the vocation or calling of every one of us, by the mere fact that we are Christians and soldiers of Christ, not to speak of the obligations of the natural law. And most of us, it may be taken for granted, are not capable of more than this, even though under different and more favourable circumstances it is possible that we might have been capable, or have rendered ourselves capable, of better things.

But some of us are capable of more than this. Some of us are unquestionably called to the practice of that higher and more perfect mode of life of which our Lord said: *Qui potest capere capiat*—"Let him take it who can";‡ to a state of life in which we shall not be content with a modicum of alms, or with the devotion of some of our leisure hours to works of charity, but hope with God's help to devote all our means and all our energies and our whole selves to His more immediate service. To

* Phil. ii. 8. † Heb. v. 8. ‡ St Matt. xix. 12.

such as these may be applied, with a special and peculiar fitness, the words which St Paul addresses to the faithful in general: "I beseech you . . . walk worthy of the vocation wherein you are called." We all remember the story of the man who, when he had arrived at the station just in time to miss his train, explained to a sympathising bystander that he had run fast enough, but that he had not started soon enough. For the youngest boy who has the priesthood in view it is not too early to start, it is not too soon to begin his preparation.

And in particular we shall do well to bear in mind, even from our earliest youth, that as our Divine Master was both Priest and Victim, so we also must be ready not only as priests to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and to administer the sacraments, but to make a genuine sacrifice of ourselves. Those of us whose ambition it is to be admitted to the priesthood or the religious life entertain this ambition, it is to be hoped, either for the sake of living in a closer union with our Lord, or in order that, in addition to seeking our own perfection, we may labour for the salvation of souls. And it is only through and by the cross that we can hope to attain to either end. The cross may come to us in many forms, in that of fatigue, or of ill-health, or of mental worries and anxieties, or of voluntary penance; or more probably all these things will combine to make up the sum of our burden; but be sure of this, that, in any case, without the cross our work would fail of its efficacy. *In hoc signo vinces*—"In this sign," the sign of the cross, and in

this sign alone, you will, please God, win many victories in His service.

And such being your prospect in the future—a prospect than which none could hold a fuller promise of true happiness—begin betimes. Do not be afraid of resolute self-denial *now*. Learn to bear pain and discomfort without complaining *now*. Learn to work with determined diligence *now*, and to persevere in working, even though your efforts should not be crowned with visible or immediate success. And that you may have strength to do these things, look, and look fearlessly, upon your crucifix, not once alone, not to-day alone, but day by day; take it in your hands, make it—as did St Philip Benizi—your chief meditation-book; see and consider what manner of King and Captain He is who calls you, and after what manner He has carried out the work which He invites you to share; and beg of your crucified Lord that He would accept you as a faithful follower under His standard, and that He would help you by His grace to "walk worthy of the vocation wherein you are called."

But some one may be disposed to raise the objection: "Don't you see what extremely bad policy it is to say all this? Why, you are, in familiar phrase, 'giving away the show'! Don't you know that there are fellows here who are not sure whether they have a vocation to the priesthood or the religious life, or no, and who will be considering the question during the course of the coming retreat; and don't you see that you are just frightening them away?" No, I do not. I trust that they are made of stiffer stuff than to be so easily alarmed. Would you be

afraid of frightening away our naval or military candidates, actual or possible, by telling them that the Emperor of Abyssinia is going to double his fleet of battle-ships, or that a Congolese expert has invented a new sort of explosive? Your future naval or military officer knows all about that, and is quite prepared to face either a sudden or a lingering and painful death, if the service of his king and country should so require. It is, indeed, precisely this readiness to die at the call of duty that entitles them to our respect. And is it to be supposed that a boy who has in time the makings of a true vocation to the priesthood will be scared by this prospect of a life of labour tinged with suffering and sorrow? I do not believe it. He knows very well that in all this he will but be paying the price for that which is beyond all price. He knows very well that the source of true joy lies not in comfort but in Christ. "No cross, no crown"; "no heroism, no holiness"; these sayings are to him as familiar as any heading in a copy-book. And I only remind you of these elementary principles to-day, in order that during your retreat you may face the truth, and screw up your courage to the sticking-point, and resolve, if you have not done so already, to start boldly and courageously upon the way of the cross. Thus, and thus only, will you walk "worthy of the vocation wherein you are called."

III

SELF-RENOVATION *

"Brethren, be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth."—EPH. iv. 23.†

WHEN we read in to-day's Mass the words in which St Paul bids his Ephesians to "be renewed in the spirit of their mind," our thoughts are almost of necessity carried back to our annual retreat.‡ For it is plain that the "renewal," or "renovation," of which the Apostle speaks, is precisely what we have been endeavouring with special earnestness to effect in ourselves during those days of silence and retirement. I say, "with special earnestness," because it would be a mischievous and delusive mistake to regard a retreat as though it were something which lay quite outside the course of our daily lives; whereas it is, in fact, a brief period during which we devote more time and attention than usual to certain exercises which in one form or other are of daily or at least of quite ordinary occurrence. While, then, it is

* October 14, 1906 (Nineteeth Sunday after Pentecost).

† From the Epistle of the day.

‡ The boys' retreat at Stonyhurst usually ends on the first Sunday in October.

quite true that during our retreat we were engaged in a process of self-renovation, it is also true that this process of self-renovation is by no means confined to the time of retreat, but is one that ought to be going on ceaselessly till the day and the hour of our death.

And now we may usefully ask ourselves and set ourselves to answer two questions: (1) What is the nature of this self-renewal or self-reformation which we are exhorted to undertake? and (2) How comes it to be necessary, and why should it be necessary to carry it on from day to day throughout our whole lives? In order to get at the root of the answer to these questions we must go a long way back, and remind ourselves of some elementary truths which we learned long ago. In the beginning God created man in His own image and likeness, with the intention that he should live in perfect obedience and subordination to his Creator, that all things on the face of the earth should minister to him in his service of God, and that, in the little world—the microcosm as it is called—of man himself, sense should be subject to spirit, passion to reason, the love of the creature to the love of the Creator. And it only needs a moment's reflection to see what an eminently reasonable state of things this would have been. When we ourselves are invested with a little brief authority, we have no difficulty whatever in perceiving how reasonable it is that those who are under our command should be obedient and tractable, ready to act upon a request without waiting for an order, and so forth. And how much more reasonable is it that man should be subject to God, to whom he owes

every particle of his substance and every moment of his existence. And so too of the subordination of the lower nature to the higher in man himself. Never was a more foolish fallacy uttered than that of those who say that it is "natural" to man to indulge his animal passions. You might as well say that because it is the nature of a drum to be beaten, and of a bassoon to be blown, therefore it is "natural" that these instruments should make as much noise as possible in an orchestra. Each of them has, of course, its proper place and use, but this is a subordinate one; and it is the nature of an orchestra, as a whole, that each instrument should perform its allotted part, without usurping what belongs to others.

Now, under the original conditions of man's first creation, not only was this subordination of himself to God, and of the lower to the higher nature in himself, perfectly *reasonable*, but—by virtue of the gifts bestowed on our first parents—it was also perfectly *easy;* since there was, under those happy conditions, no rebellion of passion against reason. But sin destroyed once and for all this perfect harmony, this harmony of harmonies in God's creation; sin once for all introduced discord into the world; the first sin inaugurated that conflict between flesh and spirit, between sense and reason, between the pride and self-sufficiency of the creature and the claims of the Creator, which has lasted through all the long ages of man's history, and will endure till the end of time. It is a conflict from which no one who has reached years of discretion is free. There is no man living who is so perfectly spiritual, so entirely united to God,

that he needs not to be on his guard against the domestic enemy whom he carries about with him; and on the other hand there is no man so utterly brutalised, so entirely abandoned to the indulgence of his passions, but that he feels from time to time some pricks of conscience which remind him that he, made in God's image, and raised by God's bounty to the supernatural order of grace, can never hope to satisfy with husks of swine the cravings and the aspirations of so noble, so exalted a nature. And what is true of sensual indulgence is true also of the madness of pride. No man is so fully self-satisfied, so entirely self-emancipated from all conscious dependence on his Creator, that he does not, at least now and again, feel something of a sense of responsibility to a Supreme Power, however vaguely conceived.

Now the renewal of which St Paul speaks, and to the carrying out of which he exhorts us to address ourselves, is the restoration, so far as is possible to fallen humanity, of the original harmony which was established by God our Creator, and which was destroyed by sin. The restoration, of course, can never be perfect; if it could, then the conflict which has just been mentioned would be at an end, at least for those who had achieved it; whereas it never can be at an end for anyone. But our position may be illustrated from that of a civilised nation exercising a sovereign sway over more or less barbarous peoples and tribes. Under such circumstances as the history of our Indian Empire has taught us, peace may be preserved, but only at the cost of constant watchfulness. All manner of precautions

against possible rebellion or mutiny are continually necessary, nor can they with impunity be relaxed; and, though the danger may be diminished in course of time, it can never be wholly eliminated. The animal, the savage, the barbarian are ever with us and in us; but with the help of God's grace, and by our own watchfulness, we can keep under control these lawless elements in our nature. The victory over our lower selves, and the maintenance of that victory, is not and never can be easy. What ought in the nature of things to have been a simple and peaceful affair has become a matter of constant effort and of occasional fierce fighting. For we have all of us to reckon with temptation, or at the very least with the possibility of temptation, whether from within or from without. And (changing the metaphor, now, to that of an external foe) we do not wait till an enemy is on the point of invading our coasts before building our fleet, and raising our army, and exercising them in the tactics and strategy of warfare. Indeed our chief security against attack lies in our preparedness (or our insecurity in our unpreparedness, as the case may be), and no small part of our preparedness lies in insuring and accustoming our forces to the actual operations of war. The British navy goes through its autumn manœuvres, and our school cadet corps performs its modest evolutions in the environs of Hurst Green or of Stockbridge, culminating in a field day on the Darwen Heights; and all this in order that we may be prepared to meet an enemy if he should pay us a visit, and also with a view to dissuading him from showing us this undesired attention.

And so it must be in the spiritual life. If we hope to exercise and to keep our self-mastery when we are tempted to sin, we must exercise our self-control and our self-mastery even in things that are not in themselves sinful. The victory over our lower selves, and the maintenance of that victory, as was said just now, is not and never can be easy. Even our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has not made it easy for us. But he has made it possible; and it is to Him that we must look for the strength and the guidance that we so urgently need.

"For this," writes St John, "did the Son of God appear," a Man among men, "that He might undo the works of the devil."* Not, indeed, so to undo them that there might be no room left for our own efforts, for our own co-operation, but first of all to make reparation for sin by His passion and death, and then to set us an example, and at the same time to purchase for us efficacious grace wherewith we might have strength and courage to follow the example which He has set. And so, if our endeavours to effect in ourselves the renewal of which St Paul speaks to us are to be, not half-hearted and spasmodic, but strenuous and persevering, we must keep before our eyes Christ crucified, who is "the Author and Finisher of [our] faith,"† to the end that we may tread manfully and sturdily, and not with dragging feet and devious course, in the path which He has marked out for us.

* 1 John iii. 8. † Heb. xii. 21.

IV

GOD'S WILL MAN'S WISDOM*

"Brethren, see how you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise, . . . understanding what is the will of God."—EPH. v. 15, 16.†

IN the words just quoted St Paul states very plainly a very plain truth. He tells us, in effect, that practical wisdom consists in knowing and in carrying out God's holy will; and that an important part of this wisdom consists in being always on our guard against those delusions and deceits of the devil which are so apt to lead men astray from the path marked out by the divine precepts and counsels. "Look to it," he says, "that you walk circumspectly"—ἀκριβῶς, *caute*, "cautiously," with an eye to the possibility of losing the track or taking a wrong turn; "not as unwise, but as wise, . . . understanding what is the will of God."

Confining our attention for the present to matters which fall within the choice of our own will, to the exclusion of those things which lie beyond our control—speaking, that is, of things which we do,

* October 21, 1906 (Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost).
† From the Epistle of the day.

not of things which happen to us—our disposition, if we are wise, ought to be this, that, so far as is possible to human frailty, it is our fixed and habitual purpose to perform no action, to speak no word, to entertain no thought, except in accordance, not merely with the positive commands of God, but with His good pleasure.

The reasonableness of this disposition may be illustrated from the outset by means of a comparison, or rather of a contrast. We all understand that the practice of hypnotism, unless it be carried out under the most stringent limitations, is—to say the least—extremely dangerous. And it is dangerous because it involves the surrender of one man's will to that of another. For the motives of the person to whom the surrender is made are not always above suspicion; his knowledge of what is for the advantage of the subject may be very much at fault; and he may be tempted to exercise his power in departments of human life over which he can have no legitimate control. But it is far otherwise with the submission of the human will to the will of God, so far as this can be ascertained. God, our Creator and Redeemer, our first beginning and last end, most unquestionably wishes us well, and, to speak in terms of human psychology, we cannot suspect *His* motives. God, the All-wise, makes no mistakes, and cannot be deceived; His knowledge is not, and can never be, at fault, and in particular He knows what is best for each one of us. Nor can we doubt that God, the Almighty Ruler of the world, will have the last word, if ever we should be so foolish as to set our will in opposition to His. Moreover, there is no department

of our lives which lies outside of His jurisdiction, nor is there any detail of our conduct, or even of our thoughts, which is so small and inconsiderable as to escape His all-seeing eye.

And this being so, there is no vacant moment or point of transition in our lives at which we may not profitably put to ourselves the questions: "What does God wish me to do now? And how does He wish me to do it?" "A man should endeavour," says St Ignatius, in effect, "to have a right intention, not only as regards his state of life, but in each particular action, sincerely seeking in all that he does to serve and please God as perfectly as he may." The principle is, after all, a dictate of the plainest common sense. We all understand that when the time comes for a man to make his choice of a state of life, the one question of which the importance is paramount over all others is just this: "What is God's will for me? In what profession or occupation can I best serve Him?" To put any other claim or any other consideration in competition with the will of God—so far as this can be ascertained—would be sheer folly. So much may be taken for granted. Now what St Ignatius tells us, in the words just quoted, is this, that precisely the same considerations should govern our choice in the details of our every-day conduct, as those which govern or should govern our choice of a state of life. The same law that regulates the whole should likewise regulate its parts. If the answer to the question how I am to spend the next twenty, or thirty, or forty years should be determined solely with reference to God's good pleasure, the question how I shall dispose of the

next half hour, or of the next ten minutes, ought, if I am a reasonable being, to be likewise determined with reference to God's good pleasure. Even in matters where no strict obligation, and therefore no question of sin, is involved, if I choose in accordance with God's good pleasure, I choose wisely; if I deliberately elect to do something which I know to be less pleasing to Him, I act very foolishly; and if again, I allow myself to grow up in the habit of acting at random and without regard for God's holy will (except where sin is concerned), my conduct is only one degree less foolish. For the consequences, positive or negative, of every deliberate act, or word, or thought, are eternal; since every such thought, or word, or act brings with it the opportunity of gaining merit in God's sight, and also of forming or strengthening good habits which in their turn prepare the way for future meritorious acts.

Now it is easy to imagine some one saying, quite honestly and conscientiously, that this view of human life "does not appeal to him"; and this might be said even by one who, in fact, habitually acted—almost without knowing it—in accordance with the very principle which has been here laid down. But, taking the phrase as it stands, it is somewhat as though one of us were to remark that the rules of the Latin grammar do not appeal to him. There are, of course, plenty of boys to whom the rules of grammar do not "appeal"; with strange consequences to the construction of their themes or exercises. But in this case the shortcoming lies not in the rules, but either in the teacher whose business it is to

expound the rules, or more probably in some lack of receptivity or quick perception on the part of the learner. And just as a boy may be slow or dull in the matter of latinity, so also we may be slow or dull in the apprehension of spiritual truth. "O foolish and slow of heart to believe," * said our Lord to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. It was a loving reproach to men who loved Him very dearly, and the best of us need not be ashamed very humbly to own and to lament our own slowness and dullness in the practical apprehension of the things of God. To return to the illustration, the parallel with the grammar is indeed close enough; for that the human will ought to be brought into agreement with the divine will is a principle precisely analogous to the rule that an adjective must agree with its substantive, or a verb with its subject. God, be it said with all reverence, is the great Substantive, and we are, so to say, mere adjectives in relation to Him.

But again, some one may say: "Such considerations are all very well for grown-ups, but I am only a boy, and I claim a boy's privileges." But remember that a boy is a man in the making; that even a boy, and especially a Catholic boy, should at least begin to think seriously of life; and moreover, that God's grace can impart maturity to the young no less than it can impart dignity to the poor. It is true that in our earlier years, if we were faithful to God and our conscience, a healthy spiritual instinct will have led us to do many laudable acts, and to avoid many things that are undesirable, without any formal or conscious choice or deliberation. But as we grow

* St Luke xxiv. 25.

older it is well not to trust too implicitly to instinct, but gradually to bring our conduct more and more completely, more consciously, more deliberately, under the dominion of reason enlightened by faith. It is thus that we shall confirm our good instincts, and turn them into sources of more abundant merit by a more explicit good intention; and it is thus that, on the other hand, we shall correct those habits which on reflection we find to be imperfect or faulty.

But now, assuming that we admit the soundness of the principle, we have to remember that its application demands no little prudence; that, as St Paul has told us, we must "walk circumspectly," or "cautiously," if we would have a practical understanding of God's will in our regard. The fact is that, in the spiritual life, even after we have overcome grosser temptations, or before we have begun to experience them, we are always in danger of being deceived and deluded as to our true interests. The point may be illustrated from an incident of quite contemporary history, one which occurred indeed less than a week ago.

If an unknown personage in the king's uniform, or a colourable imitation thereof, were to present himself at our desk one fine morning (as happened to the Burgomaster of Köpenick last Wednesday), and tell us to consider ourselves under arrest, and to start at once for the nearest military depôt, while he investigated and appropriated the contents of our cash-box, we should want to see his warrant before—like the burgomaster—we consented to obey him. We flatter ourselves that the average Englishman

would require some better and more tangible evidence of legitimate authority than a sword and a pair of epaulettes, a loud voice, a military swagger of the sort that is made in Germany, and a peremptory command. And yet, while we laugh at the strange state of society in which a superstitious regard for the uniform seems to deprive people of their common sense, and puts a whole town—officials and private citizens alike—at the mercy of a dressed-up swindler, it is worth while to ask ourselves whether the Köpenick incident may not serve as a parable of what has more than once happened to ourselves in matters that concern what is far more valuable than the contents of our cash-box. Some shallow-pated fellow comes along and assures us, by word and example, that this or that piece of foolishness, this or that way of wasting our substance, and of indulging ourselves—and him—at the cost of our self-respect, is just *the* thing for us; that it is the fashion; that it will afford us the satisfaction of feeling that we have achieved a far-off imitation of "the smart set"; that unless we adopt the latest craze we shall be old-fashioned, out of date, mediæval, prehistoric, fossils of the Eocene age, and so forth. And instead of stopping to ask ourselves whether it is God's will that we should so act, and whether our adviser holds any commission to commandeer our service, we have, perhaps, followed our leader as unresistingly as the unsuspecting burgomaster of the Prussian township. How much of heavenly treasure is daily lost through human respect we shall never know till we wake up in the light of that everlasting day which will reveal all the secrets of man's life, those which are hidden

from himself no less than those which are only concealed from his neighbour.

Or look at the matter from another point of view. In business affairs it is the system of small profits and quick returns, the habit of sedulously watching the market and availing oneself of every opening, and of being on one's guard against the many traps laid for the unwary, that leads to wealth; in every profession it is keenness as opposed to slackness that ensures success; and in the supernatural order, assuming that we secure—as, please God, we shall—the boon of eternal salvation, it is the degree and the measure of our keenness about doing God's will that must finally determine whether our reward is to be that of the faithful and diligent servant, or that of the third-class or fourth-class mediocrity. This is, of course, to put the case on the lowest ground, that of self-interest, which is nevertheless a motive to which our Lord Himself repeatedly appeals, and which none of us can afford to ignore.

But there is no lack of higher motives which may appeal, and should appeal, more powerfully to those who are capable of being moved by them; that is to say to all those of us who are not suffering from the vulgar disease of selfishness in a quite incurable form. And these higher motives are provided in and by the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. God the Son became Man, as we know very well, in order—among other reasons—to show us the divine attributes translated into the language of human conduct. If He had merely sent a prophet like Isaiah or Jeremiah, or a lawgiver like Moses, to teach us the sublime lessons of, for instance, the Sermon on the Mount; or even

if He Himself, having become Man, had done no more than utter that and other discourses, we might have remained unmoved; or we might at least have tried to minimise the unwelcome truths which His plain words convey. But when we see Him putting into execution His own precepts and counsels, then we have no longer any excuse, either for mistaking their true significance or for holding back from their practice.

Now again and again we are reminded, both by our Lord's own words and by the inspired writers of the New Testament, that His obedience and submission, as Man, to the divine will, was the fundamental characteristic of all His conduct. "I came," He tells us, "not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."* "Not My will, but Thine, be done"† are His words in the Garden of Gethsemane. "He was made obedient even unto death,"‡ says the Apostle, who tells us in another place that, whereas He was the very Wisdom of God incarnate, yet He chose, as Man, to learn obedience—obedience, that is, to the divine will—by the experience of suffering.§ With all these passages we are or ought to be familiar, and they deserve to be habitually kept in mind; for assuredly the thought of our Lord's example should strengthen and confirm that fixed determination to make God's will and God's good pleasure the rule of all our thoughts and words and actions which, as has been said, ought manifestly to be the practical conclusion of the most common-sense reflection.

* St John vi. 38. † St Luke xxii. 42. ‡ Phil. ii. 8.
§ *Didicit ex iis quæ passus est obedientiam* (Heb. v. 8).

Such then being the motives—very briefly indicated—for conformity to God's will, we shall do well to remember that there is no better means by which we may encourage ourselves to practise this conformity than that Sacrament of union to which we are so earnestly recommended to have recourse as often as possible, and therefore daily when it is daily possible for us to do so. The virtue and the value of that most holy Sacrament is not so much that it brings us into physical contact with the body of our Lord, as that by so doing it reminds us of His sufferings and death for us, and stimulates us to that union of our will with His of which the Holy Eucharist is the sign and symbol.

V

CHRISTIAN COURAGE *

"Brethren, be ye strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power."—EPH. vi. 10.†

THAT true wisdom consists in knowing the will of God, and in acting in accordance with this knowledge, and that watchfulness and prudence are needful in order to enable us to ascertain God's will in our regard, and to protect ourselves against the delusions and deceits of the enemy:—these are the truths to which our attention was directed last week. And the text which we have just heard may serve to remind us that, for the carrying out of the divine will, not prudence and watchfulness alone is needed, but also courage. In the Epistle read last Sunday, St Paul bade us to "walk circumspectly," or with caution; to-day he bids us to "be strengthened in the Lord," and to "put on the armour of God," so that we may be "able to resist in the evil day," and may hold ourselves in all respects "well equipped" (*κατεργασάμενοι*) for the combat.‡

In order to convince ourselves of the need of

* October 28, 1906 (Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost).

† From the Epistle of the day. ‡ Eph. vi. 13.

courage for the carrying out of God's will, we have only to look at our crucifix, and to ponder the lessons which it teaches us. Our Lord was "obedient," not only "unto death," but "even to the death of the cross."* It was nothing short of death upon the cross to which the divine will brought Him, our King and our Model; staunch obedience to the same divine will has brought many thousands of His followers to martyrdom; and although it does not seem at all probable that any one among us all will be put to this supreme test, yet we shall all need abundance of courage if we are to "walk worthy of the vocation" which is common to us all, the calling of the Christian and the true soldier of Christ.

We shall need courage in the first place in order to resist temptation. And all the more so because, if the victory is to be assured, we must not await the actual onset of temptation, but must habitually keep in subjection those appetites and inclinations which, if indulged, will certainly expose us not only to temptation but to defeat. We all know how St Paul, not content with mere abstention from what was evil or dangerous, would even "chastise" his body that he might bring it more thoroughly into subjection; and we all have need of some measure at least of that courage which enabled him, and so many fervent Christians after him, thus to wage war upon the enemy, instead of passively waiting for the attack. Again, our own experience during our holidays may have already taught us that we shall need courage in order to persevere in our good practices in the matter of the frequentation of the sacraments, when

* Phil. ii. 8.

the opportunities for carrying out those good practices are by no means so favourable as those which we enjoy here. A good deal of courage, too, may be required if we are faithfully to observe the laws of the Church. Some of us may, perhaps, not have heard of the incident which happened only a few weeks ago, when the King of Spain was the guest of a Scottish nobleman. It happened that during his stay there occurred the vigil and the festival of Our Lady's Assumption, the former of these being, of course, a day of fasting and abstinence, and the feast itself a holy-day of obligation. The king explained to his host that, as a Catholic, he must abstain on the vigil and hear Mass on the feast. My Lord, however, objected that it would be difficult to procure fish for the first day, and that a shooting party, or some other diversion, had been arranged for the second. The king very simply replied that if there was no fish he would eat bread and cheese, and that while other folk were very welcome to shoot, he, for his part, was going to hear Mass, as, in fact, he did. And I think we shall all admit that His Majesty "scored" on that occasion.

Morever, in other matters besides the observance of the laws of the Church, we shall need courage to brave human respect, and to strike out our own line, irrespectively of the opinions and sometimes of the ridicule of others. It is so much easier to swim with the stream than to breast it; so very much pleasanter to fall in with the fashion than to emancipate ourselves from an inglorious slavery to popular conventions and customs; conventions and customs which very often are no better than an unwritten code of systematised selfishness,

But yet again, we shall need courage to sacrifice our own pleasure for the sake of giving alms, or—what is much better than alms—for the sake of devoting some portion of our time and energies to work among the poor, or on their behalf. In this connection let me quote some words of our own Father Rector, which may be read in the columns of the *Stonyhurst Magazine.* "Efficient work among the poor," he says, "can be no mere hobby, or whim, or fancy-work." And he adds, in terms which bear directly on our present subject, viz., courage: "There is the gallant dash, in the crowded moment of glorious life, that wins the Victoria Cross; there is the sudden impulsive plunge that hurls a man into a raging sea to save a struggling shipmate from destruction. But of a different, a higher and nobler order, is the life-long effort that faces drudgery and self-sacrifice bestowed night and day upon the most abandoned and helpless of our children." * And even though we cannot, all of us, emulate the heroic virtues of him over whose mortal remains this encomium was spoken, we shall yet need courage in order to do what is in our power on behalf of our poorer brethren, instead of allowing golden opportunities to pass, while we with folded arms stand idly by.

I have quoted from one whom we all reverence as our Superior. Let me now quote from the writings of a very different person, one who is not a Jesuit, or a priest, or even a Catholic, but just a shrewd man of business, and a distinguished expert on

* From a sermon by Father Joseph Browne, S.J., preached at the Requiem for the late Mr Arthur Chilton Thomas.

commercial affairs. In his very able work on "Industrial Efficiency," Mr Arthur Shadwell, after speaking at some length of the push and energy of the American people, and of the plodding industry and the complex organisation of labour which prevails in Germany, proceeds to speak thus of his own countrymen. "Everybody," he says, "is bent on pleasure. . . . That is the universal business. No one is in a position to abuse the rest; they are all in the picture . . . from top to bottom of the social scale. Not every individual, of course, but every class. *We are a nation at play.* Work is a nuisance, an evil necessity to be shirked and hurried over as quickly and easily as possible, in order that we may get away to the real business of life—the golf course, the bridge table, the cricket and football field, or some other of the thousand amusements which occupy our minds, and for which no trouble is too great." *

Such is Mr Shadwell's estimate of the English people as a whole, and it is at least impossible to deny that the picture which he has drawn quite fairly represents a very large section of Englishmen of all classes; impossible to deny that the tendency to adopt and to act upon a frivolous view of life, such as he describes, is both powerful and widespread; impossible to deny that, if any one would resist this tendency and hold fast to a more manly programme of conduct, he will have need of much courage and strength of character.

And as we shall need courage in the future, so it behoves us to practise it in the present. Our studies

* Shadwell, *Industrial Efficiency*, ii. 454.

and our games alike afford opportunities for the exercise of that sort of courage which is shown not so much in gaining visible victories over others as in self-conquest and self-control. The use of our pocket-money gives us many an occasion of making a deliberate choice between self-indulgence on the one hand and self-denial for the sake of almsgiving on the other, and all self-denial is in its way an exercise of courage. The writer who has been quoted above would have us to resist the tendency to easy-going self-indulgence on the ground it seriously threatens our industrial efficiency as a nation. But for setting our faces manfully against this same tendency, we Catholics have motives which are both more personal and of an altogether higher order.

What, then, are these motives? If any one were to ask: "Why should we be concerned about courage in the spiritual life? Why not be content with that physical courage, as it is called, which makes men brave dangers in battle or in sport, and which Englishmen as a rule so much admire?"—it may be answered, first of all, to put the matter on the lowest ground, because in the long run "it pays." This is the motive to which our Lord appealed when He said: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul?" For what is true of the final loss of the boon of eternal salvation is true also, in its degree, of the loss of any particle of merit that has ever been within our reach. A very homely example will illustrate the matter. Suppose that in the course of his career at school a boy has spent in the aggregate quite a considerable sum on such toothsome delicacies as happen to have come

within his reach, and that during the same period he has not paid very much attention to the subject of almsgiving. The case is perhaps not common among us, but it is at least not impossible. And now let us suppose that the boy has grown up, and has reached that time of life when a man has really nothing to look forward to except the next world. How does the case stand with him now? Is he to expect a rich reward in heaven for a record consumption of caramels or Windermere cake in his boyhood? There is no word in the Gospel which authorises such an expectation. There is nothing more to show for that foolish and childish expenditure than if every penny so spent had been squandered on cigarettes, and had in literal truth evaporated in a whiff of smoke. But if he had had the good sense to bestow a considerable proportion of those pennies in alms, then not only would he have laid up abundant treasure in heaven, but to the end of his days his character would have been better and stronger for that self-denial which he had practised in early youth; and that same persevering exercise of self-denial might well have proved to be his apprenticeship to a life-long career of active charity.

But although we cannot afford to overlook the consideration of profit and loss as a motive for the exercise of generous courage in the matter of self-denial, the best and highest motive is that which is derived from the example of our Lord. In this as in other matters we shall do well, as was said at the outset, to have recourse to our crucifix, that book of wisdom from which the saints, and innumerable Christians who have fallen far short of sanctity, have

learned so much. There you see, stretched upon His bed not of mere pain but of extreme agony, One who loves you incomparably better, and incomparably more wisely, than father or mother, brother or sister, or dearest and most intimate friend. For indeed all the love of parents and relatives and true friends is but as a spark from the great furnace of the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus for each one of us. And He loves us not only better but more wisely than they. For whereas it may sometimes happen that our parents, our relatives, or our friends, blinded by a mistaken affection, indulge us and humour and pamper us after a fashion which is not for our good, our Lord not only sets before us the uncompromising doctrine of the cross, but in His own passion and death has given us the most striking object lesson in illustration and confirmation of that doctrine. Not content with instructing our minds, He would appeal to our hearts, and would ask us to do and to endure for Him some trifling fraction, according to the measure of our small capacities, of what He has done and endured for us.

It is in and through meditation on the passion of our Lord, and with the help of a frequent reception of that most holy Sacrament which is a memorial of His sufferings, that you will be "strengthened in the Lord, in the might of His power." "May God be gracious to you," wrote the Jews of Jerusalem to their brethren in Egypt, as is recorded in the second book of Maccabees: "May God be gracious to you . . . and give you all a heart to worship Him and to do His will with a great heart and a willing mind."*

* 2 Macc. i. 3.

Could a better wish be expressed on your behalf? And that this wish may be realised let us join in a prayer for generosity and courage which you cannot repeat too often.

"Dear Jesus, teach me to be generous; teach me to serve Thee as Thou deservest; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward, save that of knowing that I do Thy Will. Amen."

VI

A LAUDABLE AMBITION *

"Brethren, we are confident in the Lord Jesus, that He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus."—PHIL. i. 6.†

Opus consummavi quod dedisti mihi ut faciam—"I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."‡ So said our Lord in that long prayer which has been preserved for us in the seventeenth chapter of St John's Gospel; and our best friend could entertain or express no better wish on our behalf than that, when we come to die, our Lady and our Angel Guardian may be able to say of each one of us: *Opus consummavit*—"He has done the work which Thou gavest him to do." This is that "good work" of which St Paul says: "We are confident in the Lord Jesus, that He who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus." And the two points of meditation which are suggested by these words of the Apostle are, first, the work—the life's work—which God has given us to do, and secondly, the confidence with which we ought to trust that God will help us, without fail, in the carrying out of this work.

* November 4, 1906 (Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost).
† From the Epistle of the day. ‡ St John xvii 4.

We all of us have at least some beginnings of ambition; and so far from being altogether bad, ambition is a quality or disposition which deserves to be sedulously cultivated, though at the same time it needs to be wisely directed. A misguided and misdirected ambition may lead to all manner of evil results, as we see in the case of Napoleon, who by his colossal selfishness brought disaster upon half the countries of Europe. But the right sort of ambition led the saints of God to that glory which will be theirs forever, and which we have been celebrating during the course of the past week.

Ambition, rightly understood, deserves to be cultivated, because, if we did not cultivate it, we should run the risk of being so many editions of Mr Micawber, a gentleman whose habit it was to let things slide, and wait for something to "turn up." If we do not, even in our early boyhood, foster a reasonable ambition, we shall discover, when we have chosen or entered on our profession, that we are seriously handicapped by reason of the time and opportunities that we wasted when we were young. And this is certainly not God's will for us. It may be that he does not intend us to achieve any conspicuously brilliant success in life; but at least He does not wish that we should incur failure through our own fault. We are to strive for success, as Sir Thomas More did, even while we keep our hearts detached, as he did, from the temporal rewards of success.

And this last topic, viz., detachment, deserves and calls for some reflection and serious consideration. It has been said that while ambition ought to be cultivated, it also needs to be kept in order and wisely

directed. Imagination, in the days of our youth, is apt to be very active, and to engage us in unprofitable, foolish, and often mischievous day-dreams. We fancy that we are going to do all sorts of remarkable things (perhaps without the preliminary trouble of making any remarkable efforts), and that we are going to cut rather a conspicuous figure in the world, or at least in that particular hemisphere, or continent, or country, or town, or village, in which our lot may happen to be cast. Now, that we should wish to succeed is natural and lawful; and that we should strive to succeed is right and praiseworthy; but why? Here is the rub. Not because success, wealth, honour, position, and so forth are the true end and purpose of man's life, for they are not; but *because it is God's will* that we should do our best with the talents which He has given us. And in doing our best we must so strive for success, and for the material or social rewards of success, as to be willing to forego them if such should be God's holy will and good pleasure.

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"* was St Paul's question when he had been struck blind on the road to Damascus, and checked by a divine voice in the career of persecution on which through ignorance he had embarked. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" "Teach me, O Lord, to do Thy holy will."† The more we can make this our habitual and constant prayer, the better it will be for us. For the persevering repetition of the prayer will serve to remind us that the very best and highest thing that we can do, either with our life as a whole or with any

* Acts ix. 6. † Ps. cxlii. 10.

portion of our life, is to do just precisely what God would wish us to do. Nothing is either great or small except as God sees it to be. What He regards as of little account is of little account indeed; what He esteems highly is in very truth of high value. Now we know that God makes little account of mere size, and just as little of wealth as such, or of social position, political influence, eloquence, artistic skill, or athletic prowess. You will not be better off in heaven because you were, let us say, 7 feet high, or because you owned 10,000 acres of land, or because you were Lord Chancellor—or to pass over other departments of human greatness—because you scored 253 "not out" against the Australians. These things simply won't count at the final reckoning. The one thing that God looks to is the will, and the one quality of the will to which He looks is its conformity with His own divine will, which is identical with Himself. If a man throughout his life has sedulously and strenuously and perseveringly set himself to ascertain and to carry out God's will, he has done great things in God's eyes, even though his occupation may have been that of sweeping a crossing or carrying bricks in a hod. But if a man, puffed up with pride, lives for his own pleasure, without regard for God's will, then, however splendid his achievements may have been in the estimation of men, they will count as nothing in the eyes of Him whose judgment will be final and irrevocable for all eternity. For this we have our Lord's explicit assurance, that "many last shall be first, and many first, last." *

"O Lord, teach me to do Thy holy will." It is a

* St Matt. xix. 30.

petition which you cannot make too earnestly or too often. It is a petition the force and meaning of which will gradually dawn upon you, and will reveal itself to you as the one petition which is of supreme importance, provided only that even while you are still in the dark you will persevere in making it repeatedly and from your heart. To many the revelation comes late in life, as the result of repeated disappointments and disillusionments; to many, alas, it never comes at all. Thrice happy will you be if you can attain to it by an insight that anticipates experience, the insight of "the clean of heart," of whom it is said by our Lord Himself that "they shall see God." *

To do God's will in all things, great and small; to do God's will to-day, and to-morrow, and on every successive day of my life; this is a worthy and a wise ambition. And it is the only ambition that is truly wise or worthy of a Christian. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." "Teach me, O Lord, to do Thy holy will."

What God's will for us may be in the remoter future, we do not know. The future may have many surprises, perhaps many disenchantments, in store for us. But at every cross-road, at every parting of the ways, we shall find a sign-post that can be read, even though the inscription may often be difficult to decipher. Of course if we are careless about the sign-posts, we shall go astray; and therefore we are bidden to "walk circumspectly." And we shall likewise go astray if, in spite of sign-posts, we are too fainthearted to choose the steep and narrow footpath which breasts the hill instead of following the broad

* St Matt. v. 8.

and easy carriage-road that leads through the valley; and therefore we need courage no less than prudence in order to make life's pilgrimage aright. But besides prudence and courage, of which enough, perhaps, has been already said, we need also an unbounded confidence; and this subject of confidence we have now to consider.

Confidence is of course very closely allied to courage; but there is this difference between them, that courage is a quality or disposition of our own, whereas confidence has special relation to another. To take an example from schoolboy life, expressed in schoolboy language, if you say to someone: "Go in and win," you are exhorting him to courage. But if you say to him: "Don't be afraid, I'll back you up," or: "I'll see you through," you are appealing to his confidence in yourself. Now, our confidence in our fellow men may be well or ill grounded, according to circumstances. Speaking generally, we do well to have a thorough confidence in those who hold authority over us, each in his own department. But this confidence which we have in our fellow men is on the one hand strictly limited, and on the other hand it is, or should be, ultimately based on our confidence in God. It is because we trust God that we trust in those whom God in His providence has placed over us. But in God Himself our trust is, or should be, absolute, and without limitation to this or that department of life.

We know that God wishes us well. We know that God knows best what is good for us. And we know that He will "back us up," not merely in this or that particular instance, that He will "see us through,"

not merely in this or that particular crisis, but in every instance and in all the many crises of our existence. He has begun the good work in us, as St Paul reminds us; and He will carry it to perfection if only we will let Him, if only we will not lose heart, if only we will not allow ourselves to be wearied into slackness by the monotony of perseverance. "The monotony of perseverance," that is one of the great difficulties we have to overcome. Once upon a time, perhaps, we made a great change in our lives. We took up the practice of daily Communion, or we began to pay more constant attention to the matter of self-denial, or we entered on a more determined and definite exercise of habitual prayer. And for a time all went well. We felt the benefit of our new-found fervour. But now, the novelty has worn off. We don't seem to be advancing as we were—that is to say, we don't *feel*, as we once seemed to do, the results of our efforts, and so we are tempted to relax them. But in fact it is just now that we are making real progress, provided, of course, that we persevere. For now we are acquiring the habit (which can be acquired in no other way) of plodding steadily on without seeing the outcome of our endeavours; and this is a habit that we shall need through life.

Therefore, do not lose heart. Believe that God will bring to its consummation the good work that He has begun in you. Say to Him, in the words of Newman's hymn:—

> So long Thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
> Will lead me on,
> O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
> The night is gone.

With unbounded generosity, with unreserved readiness to make any sacrifice which He may ask of you, say, again and again: "Teach me, O Lord, to do Thy holy will." And let the counterpart of your unbounded generosity be your unbounded confidence that He will "back you up" and "see you through."

VII

ENEMIES AND FRIENDS OF THE CROSS*

"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things. But our conversation is in heaven."—PHIL. iii. 18-20.†

WHEN, towards the close of His last journey from Galilee, a few days before His passion, our Lord drew nigh to Jerusalem, we are told that, "seeing the city, He wept over it";‡ and the Evangelist has recorded for us, in the Master's own words, the reason of His tears. He wept because, false to her name and to her high destiny, that chosen and favoured city had not known "the things that were for her peace."§ In the Epistle to the Philippians, the best beloved of all St Paul's converts, the Apostle, in a burst of confidence, tells his neophytes that he too, in the course of his ministry, has found cause for tears. "Weeping I tell you," he says, "that many walk," or conduct themselves, after such a fashion as

* November 11, 1906 (Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost).
† From the Epistle of the day. ‡ St Luke xix. 41.
§ St Luke xix. 42.

to declare themselves "enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who mind earthly things," whereas the heart of the true and faithful Christian is set upon the life to come: "Our conversation," he says, "is in heaven." And in this same deep and heartfelt sorrow, every priest to whom any responsibility for human souls has been entrusted must needs have his share. For whereas it is his mission to guide men, to the best of his ability, in the way that leads through true peace in this life to perfect happiness in the next, he knows well that, for all his efforts, there will always be some who choose rather the broad and easy way that leads to destruction through the deceptive pleasures of a life of sin. And whereas it is his mission to preach Christ crucified, and to draw out and inculcate the lessons which our Lord has taught us from His cross, he is well aware that some there will always be who not only turn a deaf ear to his words, but by their influence and example draw others away from that salutary teaching which is not his but his Divine Master's. Such persons do indeed deserve to be called, as St Paul styles them, "enemies of the cross of Christ."

Now, when it is said that there will always be found persons of this kind, this is to be understood, of course, about the world at large; for, as for us here at school, we should none of us like to believe that this description fitted ourselves. We are not as fervent as we should wish to be; but "enemies of the cross"—this at least we hope that we are not. And indeed it is lawful to hope that there is no one

among us all who is an enemy of the cross in the full sense in which the Apostle employs the phrase. For the context shows, plainly enough, that he has in mind men who are given over to the grosser forms of sin, and to the unrestrained indulgence of their animal passions. Of such men it is not necessary to speak here and now; though, indeed, we must never lose sight of the possibility that we might become even such as these, if we are not sedulously on our guard against the first beginnings of evil.

For it is well to remember that even in the best of us there are tendencies and inclinations, deeply rooted in our nature, and that even the best of us are liable to be affected by influences from outside, which may be rightly and truly described as hostile to the cross of Christ; inclinations which must be overcome and influences which must be resisted, if we would avoid the danger of ourselves becoming—at least unconsciously and in some degree—enemies of that saving sign. What those inclinations and influences are we shall the better understand if we remember and consider what the cross stands for, or in other words, the lessons which it teaches us.

The cross stands, in the first place, for entire and complete submission to the will of God, and for thorough obedience to all lawful authority; the cross stands for patience, for the willing endurance of pain and loss, not merely as a lesser evil than sin, but as a means towards our sanctification; the cross stands for unselfishness, and for the spirit of generous self-sacrifice; and lastly, the cross points heavenwards, and bids us fix our hopes there, and not in the passing pleasures of this present life. These, as we

well know, are some of the lessons which the cross teaches us, and they are lessons which we are none of us too young to learn.

And it is the inclinations and the influences that are opposed to these lessons against which we have to be on our guard, and which we must needs combat, if we would be friends and not enemies of the cross of Christ. Now, that we must resist temptations to sin is plain enough; but the cross invites us to aim at something better and higher than the mere avoidance of sin. Short of temptation to sin there is what the Book of Wisdom calls "the bewitchment," or fascination, "of trifling" — *Fascinatio nugacitatis obscurat bona.** If you hold up a halfpenny close enough to your eye, you can cover with it, and so shut out of view, the whole disc of the sun. And even so, the most contemptible trifles are capable of blotting out the vision or remembrance of the cross. Our Lord from that throne of His love teaches us that life is a very serious matter, that our years and days and hours are given us to be spent in God's service, and not to be frittered away in aimless pursuits which have no end or purpose beyond themselves. On the other hand the inclinations of many of us, and the influence of the world around us, would lead us to spend as much as possible of our time and means and energies on these same purposeless and aimless pursuits. And because we are very apt to be deceived by external appearances, and to be led away by the views and opinions which pass current among unthinking men, so as not to recognise the folly of what is indeed mere foolishness, let us take

* Wisd. iv. 12.

an illustration which may be all the more effective precisely because it is ridiculous.

If a man's highest ambition in life were to knock down a record number of cocoa-nuts in a gipsy encampment on the village green; or if his chief delight were to patronise the steam roundabouts in a fair; we should pronounce him to be a lunatic with rather vulgar and childish tastes. Now, that is precisely the sort of lunatic that we should be if we were to treat any form of what ought to be mere recreation as though it were the serious business of life. Whether a man takes his pleasure in cheap gyrations round an upright post, or whether he makes the axis of the earth the pivot of his globe-trotting, it is all one in God's eyes. The difference in the diameter of the circle in the two cases, and the circumstance that one form of amusement is highly fashionable, and the other lowly and plebeian, is of no account whatever in the sight of God. The only difference which counts with Him is a difference of intention. When a man seeks recreation, whether on the larger or on the smaller scale, whether of a fashionable or of a popular kind, in order to fit himself for work, he is doing something which pleases God and has the divine approval. And the same is true of amusements or recreations in which we take part as an act of charity to others, or again, for the general well-being of those with whom we live, as is the case with our public games at school. In these, for a variety of reasons, we do well to join with spirit and energy, and not after a slack and lazy fashion. But, as soon as a man begins to make of amusement or sport an end in itself, he reduces

himself to the condition of a grown-up child, playing, perhaps, with very expensive and fashionable toys—a motor-car, a yacht, a stud of race-horses, or whatever it may be—but still with toys. We have been reminded that God does not reckon greatness by size. It is no less true that He does not measure maturity by years. A boy like Stanislas Kostka, whose feast we keep next Tuesday, may have more than the wisdom—even though he must needs lack the varied external experience—of a grown man. And on the other hand a man may live to be a hundred and yet preserve, in all essential respects, the tastes and habits of the nursery. He may be as selfish and frivolous as any small child in short frocks. Let me sum up this part of the subject by saying: "Do not treat God's world as though it were a great big steam roundabout which the Creator has set going for your entertainment."

But there are other forms of trifling, and other unworthy ideals of life, besides that of sport. There is the ideal of what may best be described as "swagger." Swagger may of course take a great variety of shapes, some of them so eminently respectable that we hardly recognise them as falling under this category at all. Other and more elementary manifestations of this failing are at once seen to be more or less contemptible. For instance, if a man endeavours to secure the regard and esteem of his fellow-creatures by wearing, let us say, Hessian boots and a sky-blue waistcoat, his folly is plainly of the same order with that of the gentleman who walked the transpontine stage, in the early Victorian era, clad in trousers of a pronounced chess-board pattern.

Fashions change from year to year, and the fashions of the rich differ from those of the relatively poor; but all fashions in the matter of personal adornment are alike in the eyes of Him who loves what is simple and unassuming, and who is no respecter of clothes. The strut and the swagger are the essential element in this kind of folly; the cut and the colour matter not at all. But indeed we may go further, and say that any and every man who, by whatsoever means, makes it his chief aim in life to secure the regard and esteem of his neighbour, is guilty of the same kind of folly, under a different form, as the man with the check trousers. We, being highly civilised mortals, set down that particular exhibition of vanity as a piece of bad taste. But in God's eyes it is bad taste to look elsewhere than to Him for the ultimate approval of our conduct.

Of course, these are only illustrations, on the one hand extreme, and on the other hand venial in their petty kinds, of unworthy selfishness, or, if the term be not too ponderous, of the spirit of worldliness, of a spirit meanly opposed to the high and noble teaching of the cross of Christ. But instead of multiplying such illustrations, let us turn rather to a more cheerful and encouraging aspect of the matter in hand. If St Paul, writing to the Philippians, had occasion to grieve over some who were enemies of the cross of Christ, we may be quite sure that if he were among us here to-day he would have abundant cause to rejoice over many who are in a very true and full sense friends of the cross of Christ. Obedience, docility, patience, self-denial, generosity to the poor for our Lord's sake, the spirit

of self-sacrifice, these things are assuredly not wanting here. There is no lack of good and edifying example among us. What we need is that many more should do what many are doing already, and that all of us should do better, and with greater energy, and more spontaneously or of our own accord, what after some fashion we are all of us constrained to do by the very conditions of our life at school.

VIII

A JESUIT MARTYR *

Ignem veni mittere in terram.—"I came to cast a fire upon the earth."—ST LUKE xii. 14.

IT was on a day early in the month of June 1580, that Edmund Campion, then on his way from Rome to England, was invited to address the students of the newly established English Seminary at Rheims. The occasion was a striking one; for Campion, though not the official Superior, was unquestionably the most distinguished member of the first band of those intrepid soldiers of Christ, who, having perforce received their ecclesiastical education abroad, returned to their own country at the imminent peril of their lives, there to use their best endeavours to repair the havoc wrought by the so-called Reformation. And it was, moreover, the first opportunity that he had enjoyed, after the lapse of many years, of speaking in public in his own native language. The text which he chose was that which you have just heard: *Ignem veni mittere in terram*—"I came to cast a fire upon the earth." The particular application of the

* December 1, 1905 (Feast of B. Edmund Campion). Preached in the Church of St Peter, Stonyhurst.

text which he made on that occasion need not now concern us. Enough to say that, as he warmed to his subject, so vehement were his cries of: "Fire! fire! fire!" that some good people outside are said to have taken the alarm, and to have come running in to allay the supposed conflagration.

The incident is typical of the ardour with which that blessed martyr, whose feast we are celebrating to-day, entered upon his missionary career. It was a career of which, in that very sermon, he had presaged the tragic end. And so well assured was he that he was going to meet his death, that when on the 24th of June, St John the Baptist's day, he landed at Dover, his first act was to fall on his knees in prayer, imploring God—as we are told—to grant him just one year in which to labour for the conversion of his fellow-countrymen. His prayer was heard almost to the letter. Within a fortnight after the one year of his ministry had run its course, Campion was arrested, and the short remainder of his life was spent in prison. In that one year, however, he not only effected more (as Father Persons tells us) than any of his fellow missioners, but more perhaps than many of them together were able to achieve during a far longer period. For the workings of God's grace are not to be measured by mere lapse of time, and a man who is on fire with zeal and the love of God may fulfil in a brief space the length of many days. And therefore it is no matter for surprise that the effects of his preaching were extraordinary. Notwithstanding the dangers which in those days threatened all "Popish recusants," as they were called, if they were detected in any

exercise of the Catholic religion, men and women flocked together from long distances, sometimes even spending the night in barns and outhouses, in order to hear Campion preach, and to receive from his hands the Holy Sacrament of the Altar. His converts, too, were reckoned literally by thousands. And it is a contemporary writer who assures us that these extraordinary results were due, not to the preacher's learning or to his gift of natural eloquence, but—as has been already implied—to that fire of love and of zeal which made itself apparent in all his utterances, as indeed it inspired them all, as it had inspired that first English discourse of his at Rheims. Nor was this fire quenched when his work, as it might seem, was brought to a sudden close by his arrest. Once more it broke out, conspicuously visible to those around him, when, on hearing from the lips of his judge the sentence of death with all its ghastly details, he promptly responded in the words of the *Te Deum laudamus*, astounding all present by his noble courage, and by the holy joy with which he went, as one going to a marriage feast, to confront his doom.

Ignem veni mittere. The fire which he was to kindle in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen he had first kindled to a white heat of intensity in his own breast. And how had he done this? How had the change been wrought whereby Campion, the polished and courtly scholar, had been transformed into Campion the apostle, thirsting for martyrdom? It is easy to admire the wonderful energy, the untiring activity of his brief and brilliant apostolate; and no one who reads the story of his imprisonment, his

tortures, his trial and his glorious death can fail to be touched and moved by the narrative. But it may be more profitable to reflect that, for his one year of active work, and for those six months of suffering endured with such heroic patience, Campion had made a long and silent preparation during no less than ten years of prayer, and study, and penance.

Here is a lesson of primary importance to those of us more especially who are still young. Are there any of you who are ready, or who hope some day to be ready, to shrink from no sacrifice, to shirk no hardship, to quail before no danger, nay, who would rejoice were you counted worthy to suffer stripes and death, in the service of our Lord? Please God there are. Stonyhurst men, scores of them, have shown that they did not fear hardships, or wounds, or death, in the service of their sovereign, and is it to be supposed that we should be less generous in the cause of God? Shall we not, all of us, at least be laudably impatient of that bourgeois view of life which is so lamentably common in our day, that view of life which looks to ease and comfort, or at best to temporal success and distinction, as the desirable goal, and which holds respectability for the most estimable of the virtues? Please God, the missionary spirit and the martyr spirit, the spirit of zeal and the spirit of courageous endurance are by no means dead among us. It is indeed improbable, though it certainly is not impossible, that any of us should be called upon to suffer death for Christ. But we *are* called, every one of us, to spend our lives, the whole of our lives, every day, and hour, and moment of

our lives, in His faithful service. To every one of us, whatever our future occupation may be, He has given a work—a work for Him and for our neighbour as well as for ourselves—which He wishes us to do. To every one of us, whether priest or simple religious or layman, is allotted some share, if we will but accept it, in the task of spreading abroad, by our words, our labours, our example, our influence, that fire which Campion came hither to kindle. Aye, if we will but accept it. For the choice lies with us, either manfully to face the task which God has assigned to us, or to shrink from it in craven cowardice, to be men of half measures, of slack and half-hearted efforts. Some of you, at least, are keen-sighted enough to see that to aim at the very highest that is within our reach is, after all, the merest common sense, and that to imagine that we know better than God knows what is best for us, is nothing short of intolerable folly, under the deceptive guise of a conceit of superior wisdom.

To you, then, who are determined seriously to set yourselves to the carrying out of the work which God has put into your hands, and to measure your efforts, not by the limits of strict duty, but by the utmost extent of your capacities, to you I say that the time for entering upon that great work is not to-morrow, or the day after, but to-day. What the future may have in store for us, we none of us know. But we do know that for each one of us the future, as God sees it, is being shaped by the present; and that the only way in which we can hope to do God's work, as God would have us to do it, is daily to fulfil, with minute fidelity, each day's allotted task. Your

fervent prayers, here in this church, to-day; your avoidance of the dangerous occasions of sin, to-day; your control of tongue and temper, to-day; your alms for the propagation abroad, or the preservation at home, of that faith for which Campion shed his blood—alms given, perhaps, at the cost of some self-indulgence renounced, to-day; your playing up briskly in some public game, when perhaps you may feel inclined to be lazy and torpid, to-day; the time which you may of your own free will devote to some useful occupation instead of wasting it in idleness, to-day; these things—not all for every one but some of them for each—these things are the work which God has given you to do, to-day, and they will be your best preparation for to-morrow's task, and for the greater efforts, the greater sacrifices, the greater deeds of later years. So it was, by careful and minute and daily fidelity in little things, that as we may gather from one of his own letters, Campion prepared for his ministry and his martyrdom; and so, and not otherwise, must we prepare for our life's work, and for death.

And this daily and persevering fidelity, this hourly embracing of the simple and the strenuous life, this ceaseless battle against the downward tendency to slackness and indolence and self-indulgence, no less truly than martyrdom itself, requires in its degree a high and noble courage. It was one and the same fire of divine love which strengthened Campion to face undaunted the gallows and the quartering-block, which sent Xavier to the Indies and Japan, which heartened Stanislas Kostka for his courageous tramp to Rome, which inflamed Aloysius Gongaga with a

consuming desire of more and more penance that he might be more closely united to his crucified Master, and which kept John Berchmans patiently plodding at his desk, obedient and respectful to everyone placed over him, observant of every rule, and content to do the most ordinary things extraordinarily well, because such was God's will for him. *Diversitates gratiarum, idem autem spiritus*—"There are diversities of graces, but the same spirit." *

Ignem veni mittere in terram. We too need a share and a large share of that fire that burned so brightly in the heart of Campion. O that he were here to-day, to rouse us with his trumpet-cry of Fire! fire! fire! O that he were here to-day, to speak to us in burning words of the vanity of those frivolous trifles over which we are so prone to fritter away our time and our energies to our own everlasting loss, and to the loss too of all who are now or will hereafter come under our influence, or for whom we may be responsible. O that he were here to-day to help us to emancipate ourselves from all that tends to hinder us from steady progress towards perfection in the way of God's service.

We cannot indeed claim Edmund Campion as an alumnus of this school; for he died, as you may remember, thirteen years before the first foundation of the English College at St Omers. But he was a pioneer of the movement which led to the setting up of that and many similar institutions overseas; and so we may fairly count him among our spiritual ancestry. Truly we may say to him, in the words of a school song, which,

* 1 Cor. xii. 4.

though not our own, we may yet adopt and adapt for ourselves:

> We are no sons of yesterday,
> But heirs of thine and thee;

even as were those St Omers boys of whom Father Warner wrote, a century after Campion's death, that they were proud of the sufferings which their parents had to undergo for the faith, and eager to fortify themselves, by prayer and self-denial, to endure the like. O that Campion were here to bid us lift up our hearts to noble aims and high ambitions, and to scorn and spurn from us the unworthy principles and ideals of a most unchristian worldliness.

O that Campion were here! And yet a greater than Campion is here. Here on this altar, in this tabernacle, is He whose Sacred Heart is the very furnace of that fire of love from which the heart of Campion was kindled. And the same fire may be kindled in your hearts also from the same source; aye, and will be kindled, if you will but draw near to Him, and keep yourself close to Him, by earnest, persevering, habitual prayer, and by the frequent and fervent reception of that gift of Himself which He offers you in the most Holy Sacrament of His love.

But remember that if the fire in your hearts is to be something better than a mere spark, or a fitful flame, or the dull heat of smouldering embers, if the Holy Sacrament is indeed to be to you like that live coal from the altar wherewith the seraph touched the lips of the prophet, you must pray with intense earnestness, absorbed in the sense of God's

all-embracing and all-pervading presence, pouring out your soul to Him with absolute confidence, and at the same time strengthening and stiffening your will to a strong and resolute determination and a generous readiness to give something to our Lord in requital of all that you have received and are ever receiving from Him; to give Him something, nay to give Him everything, without reserve, that He may be pleased to ask at your hands. Then, indeed, the fire of your love will be fanned by divine grace to a heat fierce enough to consume the holocaust of your self-offered selves. Then will your life become what the life of every Christian ought to be, a life of continual sacrifice; and on this condition alone will you enjoy an abounding and unshaken happiness, a happiness the most complete and entire that is attainable in this world.

Ignem veni mittere in terram.—"I came to cast fire upon the earth." That this sacred, this sacrificial fire may be kindled to fresh and ever-increasing fervour in the heart of every one of us, is a blessing or which we shall do well very earnestly to pray.

IX

A MODEL LAYMAN *

"And he stood up in the shameful fall of the people: in the goodness and readiness of his soul he appeased God for Israel." —ECCLUS. xiv. 29.

AMONG all the innumerable martyrs of many ages and of many lands whose memory, recorded or unrecorded, we hold in veneration, there is none whose example should more powerfully appeal to us, or whose life is more worthy of our careful study, than the Blessed Sir Thomas More. First, because he was our own fellow-countryman; and, without intending any disrespect to other nations, it is natural to feel that we understand a man who was born and bred in England, and who spoke our own language, better than we could expect to understand a foreigner. Secondly, because of the greatness of our indebtedness to him; for of him it may be truly said that "he stood up," alone with the holy Bishop of Rochester, the Blessed John, Cardinal Fisher, "in the shameful fall of the people"; that "in the goodness and readiness of his soul he appeased God" on behalf of the English nation; and that to the splendid

* December 10, 1905 (Second Sunday in Advent).

example of his constancy we owe in great measure that boon of the Catholic faith which we have inherited. Thirdly, because he was a layman, as most of us will be. And lastly, because his particular type of holiness was not that of those countless servants of God who have lived and died in comparative obscurity, but that of one who had attained to the highest possible distinction in his profession, and whose position was in the very forefront of the public life of his time.

And if it be asked why this particular occasion should have been chosen for a few words about this holy martyr, it may be a sufficient answer to say, that while on the one hand his life is so full of profitable instruction as to be suitable for consideration at all times, and the example of his determined and resolute self-conquest is particularly appropriate to a penitential season such as this of Advent, on the other hand it has seemed desirable that we should set before our eyes a companion picture to that of the Blessed Edmund Campion, which we have so recently studied. After all, Campion was a Jesuit; and the great majority of us have no intention of applying for admission to the Society of Jesus. But in the life of More, at least so far as its interior spirit is concerned, there is nothing which any layman may not seek to emulate; and there is much too, even in its external features, which every one of us may most profitably imitate.

As looked at from outside, it may be said very briefly that More's life was in the highest degree frugal, studious, strenuously industrious, and quite ideally domestic; that it presented at every point

the sharpest possible contrast to the habits of the "smart set" in modern society, as depicted for us in contemporary literature; that his career, until the crisis which brought about his downfall, was successful almost beyond the dreams of any reasonable ambition; and that the crisis in question served to bring into evidence a tenacity of purpose, and a conscientious fidelity to principle, which none but those who were most familiar with him would have suspected, and which astonished even those who had ever been in closest sympathy with him, but who failed to reach his own heights of heroism.

But this is, after all, a very superficial account of the matter. The true key to his character and to his career is to be found in the depth and intensity of his religious convictions. For him, of all men, it may be said that "the fear of the Lord" was indeed "the beginning of wisdom";* of him it may be safely asserted that the supreme importance of the eternal interests of man's soul was the truth which dominated his whole life; and that the fixed determination to be faithful at all costs to God and his conscience was his ruling motive, not merely during the closing period of severe trial, but from the days of his youth and early manhood.

Nor must we suppose that the affective element was lacking to his religion. He was a man who well understood the virtue of Christ's passion, its potency as a stimulus to action, and as a source of comfort in tribulation; and to it he cherished throughout his life a most tender devotion.

It is not without reason that stress is here laid on the

* Ps. cx. 10.

continuity and consistency of More's principles and practice through all the stages of what he himself ever regarded, without affectation, as his earthly pilgrimage. We all like to think that, were we exposed to trials such as he had to undergo during the three or four years which preceded his martyrdom, we should, with the help of God's grace, show the like constancy and achieve a glorious victory like his. But it is well to remember that, as has been said, among the men of eminent distinction in the eyes of the world who lived in those troublous times, Fisher and More stood absolutely alone in their constancy. And it is well to bear in mind that if these two men were then exceptional in their fidelity under a terrible trial, they had been no less exceptional in their previous lives. For every Christian, as our Lord warns us in the parable of the watchful servants, life should be a preparation for death;* and it is not too much to say that More's whole life had been—almost as though he had foreseen what the future had in store for him—a preparation for martyrdom.

For our present purpose it may be sufficient to direct our attention to two points, his austerities and his detachment, the latter being illustrated by a prayer of his concerning which something will be said presently.

It is plain from several passages in his own writings, and from contemporary testimonies, that More was by nature a man of strong passions, and liable to severe temptations, and that he saw very clearly that for him the saving of his soul would be an affair of downright hard fighting. And with such

* St Luke xii. 35 ff. *Cf. In the Morning of Life*, pp. 28 ff.

a man we may well have a closer fellow-feeling than with one who, as we might imagine, had lived a blameless life chiefly because he had never lain under the necessity of subduing the rebellion of corrupt nature. Feeling in himself that continual warfare of which St Paul speaks between the law of God in his conscience and the incitements of the flesh, he very resolutely took to himself those other words of St Paul: "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection."* There were no half-measures with him, as we learn from the quaint but graphic description left us by his great-grandson Cresacre More. "When he was about eighteen or twenty years old, finding his body . . . most rebellious, he sought diligently to tame his unbridled concupiscence by wonderful works of mortification. He used oftentimes to wear a sharp shirt of hair next his skin, which he never left off wholly, no, not when he was Lord Chancellor of England; which my grandmother on a time in the heat of summer espying, laughed at, not being much sensible of such kind of spiritual exercise, . . . and not knowing *quæ sunt spiritus*, wherein the true wisdom of a Christian man consisteth. He added also to this austerity a discipline every Friday and high fasting days, thinking that such cheer was the best he could bestow on his rebellious body, . . . having learned the true interpretation of these words of Christ: He that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it for life everlasting. He used also much fasting and watching, lying often either upon the bare ground or upon some bench, . . . [and] allotting himself but four or five hours in a night at the most

* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

for his sleep; imagining with the holy saints of Christ's Church, that his body was to be used like an ass, with strokes and hard fare, lest provender might prick it, and so bring his soul like a headlong jade into the bottomless pit of hell. . . . He had inured himself to straitness that he might the better enter in at the narrow gate of heaven, which is not got with ease, *sed violenti rapiunt illud*, that is to say, they that are boisterous against themselves bear it away by force. For this cause he lived four years among the Carthusians, dwelling near the Charterhouse, [and] frequenting daily their spiritual exercises," and so forth.*

Now it might, perhaps, have been supposed, that so penitential a life must needs have made him gloomy and morose. But so far was this from being the case, that his lightheartedness and cheerful humour were well known to all sorts and conditions of men; and this to such an extent that it was even made a charge against him, by the sour-faced Pharisees of the day, that he was always ready with a jest. And this lightheartedness and indomitable cheerfulness, as his letters and other contemporary documents abundantly testify, he carried with him throughout the tedious months of his imprisonment, and even to the platform of the scaffold on Tower Hill.

However, it is not with More's cheerfulness that we are at present chiefly concerned; nor again is it suggested that under present conditions we can imitate in detail his practices of rigorous penance.

* Quoted in *Lives of the English Martyrs*, edited by Dom Bede Camm, O.S.B., i. 128-9.

But it is important to remember that the principles of the spiritual life are the same in the twentieth century as in the sixteenth; that the devil, the world, and the flesh are our enemies now as they were More's enemies then; that now, as then, the flesh must be kept in subjection by determined and resolute self-denial; and that the most salutary form of self-denial which we, as schoolboys, can practise—over and above that which is involved in our work—is the keeping under control of our appetite for unnecessary and often unwholesome delicacies. It is the head-master of a great non-Catholic public school who writes, with reference to such institutions: "I am not speaking of this school or of that, but as far as I know of all, when I say that the amount of money spent by boys on unnecessary dainties is simply appalling." * In Catholic schools, thank God, it may be hoped that matters are not so bad as this, though there is always a danger lest we should even remotely approach so unholy an ideal. But the words are quoted by reason of their bearing on what follows. For, speaking immediately afterwards about offences against the holy virtue of purity, he attributes the weakness of will which all but incapacitates many boys for resisting temptation precisely to this form of self-indulgence. "The wills of some of them," he says, "are feebly developed. Why? Simply because the idea of restraining their bodily appetites has never for one moment entered their heads. Whatever desires they have hitherto felt they have instantly gratified, and where this has not been the case it has been from want of opportunity, not from choice." †

* Lyttelton, *Mothers and Sons*, p. 72. † *Ibid.*, p. 75.

And now, "look upon this picture and on that"; on Cresacre More's description of his illustrious ancestor and on Canon Lyttelton's description of the modern non-Catholic public schoolboy. To which of these two should we wish to approximate? The question needs only to be asked. Our conscience will supply the answer.

A few words must be said in conclusion about that detachment from worldly things which was so marked a feature in More's character. As has been already implied, it cannot, perhaps, be better illustrated than by quoting at length a prayer which has recently been published for the first time by Dom Bede Camm, O.S.B., in his admirable biography of the Martyr. The prayer in question was written by Sir Thomas in the margins of a little book of "Hours," or office-book, which he constantly used. And it may serve to bring into clear relief two points in particular which are deserving of our most serious consideration. In the first place it is impossible to read the document with any degree of attention without perceiving that the writer was a man who had long and diligently practised the holy exercise of meditation; for no one who had not done so could possibly have bethought himself of such petitions as are here so earnestly made. And secondly, these same petitions afford the most unmistakable evidence that a man who has been in the highest degree successful in a lay profession may yet remain profoundly unworldly. To state the matter as succinctly as possible, More had worked hard because he knew that it was God's will that he should work; and he had succeeded because he had worked hard; but his

prayer shows clearly that he regarded all the fruits of his labour as of no account whatsoever by comparison with the one supreme end and aim of human life, which is to stand well with God. Here, then, is this memorable document:

Prayer of Sir Thomas More

written by him in the margin of his prayer-book.

Give me Thy grace, good God,
To set the world at nought;
To set my mind fast upon Thee, and not to hang
Upon the blast of many men's mouths;
Little and little to utterly cast off the world,
And rid my mind of all business there;
Not to long to have here any worldly things, but that
The hearing of worldly fancies may be to me displeasant;
Gladly to be thinking of God;
Piteously to call for His help;
To lean unto the comfort of God;
Busily to labour to love Him;
To know mine own vileness and wretchedness;
To humble and meeken myself under the mighty hand of God.
To bewail my sins past;
For the purging of them patiently to suffer adversity.
Gladly to bear my purgatory here;
To be joyful of tribulations;
To walk the narrow way that leadeth to life;
To bear the cross with Christ;
To have the last things in remembrance.
To have ever before my eyes the death that is ever at hand,
To make death no stranger to me.
To foresee and consider the everlasting fire of hell;
To pray for pardon before the Judge come.
To have continually in mind the passion Christ suffered for me;
For His benefits incessantly to give Him thanks;
To buy the time again that I have lost;
To abstain from vain confabulations;

To eschew light [and] foolish mirth and gladness;
  Recreations not necessary to cut off;
Of worldly substance, friends, liberty, life and all to set the loss
  At right nought for the winning of Christ.

To think my most enemies my best friends; for the brethren of Joseph could never have done him so much good with their love and favour as they did him with their malice and hatred.

X

THE SELF-ABASEMENT OF JESUS*

"Brethren . . . let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus, who being in the form [or, nature] of God . . . emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant; being made in the likeness of men . . . He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death; even to the death of the cross."—PHIL. ii. 3-5.

IT is a very old and familiar truth that our Lord came to save us and to teach us; to save us by His death on the cross; to teach us by those discourses and parables which He delivered during the three years of this public ministry; but also to teach us by that example which He began to set from the first moment of His human life on earth, and in the very act and fact of His Incarnation. Of this we are reminded in the words of the text, in which St Paul tells us that He, the Divine Lord and Master of all creation, co-equal with the Father, took upon Himself the weakness and limitations of one who by his very nature is a servant; and that in this our human nature He did in fact live a life of service, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

The circumstances of our Lord's birth were unques-

* December 17, 1905 (Third Sunday in Advent).

tionably a part of the scheme of His divine providence in our regard. It was no mere accident that He was born at a time when His Mother and His foster-father were absent from home, and in a place where by reason of the crowd there was no room for them in the inn, so that He was born in a stable and cradled in a manger. Nor was it merely by chance that the time of His birth coincided with that of a general census, so that He was formally enrolled in the ranks of the poor. And it was with a definite purpose, and for our instruction, that, from the outset of His life on earth till its tragic close, He submitted Himself to every observance of the law, and practised in the highest perfection the virtue of obedience to lawful authority. All this He did in order that He might teach us a very practical lesson, the *one* lesson which He has explicitly bidden us to learn from His own example: "Learn of Me that I am meek and humble of heart." It is a lesson which, while it is most necessary for us all, is yet by no means easy to learn.

For we are all of us, by reason of the corruption of our nature, more or less prone to pride, to think highly of ourselves, to resent subjection, to shake ourselves free from such control as we can possibly avoid or evade. Such inclinations are common to us all; but like other natural inclinations they can either be held in check, controlled, and in the end mastered, or on the contrary, they may be allowed to conquer and master us. Nor can there be any doubt in the mind of a Christian as to which is the better course. Take by way of instance, that truly great and wise and eminently good man of

whom something was said last Sunday, a man whose nobility of character was acknowledged even by his enemies, the very model of a Catholic layman, Sir Thomas More. See him, on his way to preside in the High Court of Chancery, going first, as he had been accustomed to do throughout his childhood and boyhood, to seek the blessing of his father, who at that time sat as judge in one of the inferior courts. It is not the act itself that is proposed for our imitation, for it is not in accordance with our modern ways and manners; but the spirit of humble reverence which prompted the act has always, and justly, been admired. Or read again the words of that prayer in which he daily begged that he might know more and more clearly his own "vileness and wretchedness," and that he might "humble and meeken" himself "under the mighty hand of God"; a prayer that assuredly could only be the fruit of long and diligent consideration of the great truths of faith. Not so the vain, the self-conceited youth of the world, who has rarely given himself the trouble of thinking seriously about anything except the outward show of life and his own particular part in the pageant. There is no sense of "vileness and wretchedness" about him. He is vain, not only of qualities which are good in themselves—or would be good if he did not spoil them by his vanity—but even of his very defects, which he mistakes for excellences. He thinks it, for instance, rather a fine thing to show that he has emancipated himself from the duty of paying respect to anyone (except under the influence of fear or of hopeful expectation), and that he deems himself fully qualified and entitled to judge, to criticise,

to ridicule anyone and everyone whose acts and words do not happen to commend themselves to his superior wisdom. He is perfectly satisfied with himself, superciliously contemptuous of others, and as serenely self-complacent as an ebony gentleman on the banks of the Congo, who to the scanty costume of his tribe has added the glories of a rainbow tie and a cheap white waistcoat. A pitiful and ridiculous object, if only he could see himself as he really is, or as others see him; but unfortunately deficient in a sense of humour so far as his own sartorial shortcomings are concerned. This is, of course, a parable not of things as they are, but of things as they might come to be with any one of us. For there is not one of us so virtuous, or so thoroughly confirmed in grace, but that—if he were to yield to his pride—he might in course of time become the moral counterpart of that Congolese worthy, or, in other words, what Newman styles "a bad imitation of polished ungodliness."

Now for this fatal tendency to pride, self-complacency, and self-assertiveness, a sovereign remedy is to be found in the example of our Lord, whose coming in lowliness at Bethlehem, and whose life of obedience and submission at Nazareth, will be brought before our minds at this Christmas season, now so near at hand. It is an example which we should indeed be foolish to disregard; for it is the example on which all truly Christian lives have been formed during nearly two thousand years, the one example which can lead us to true greatness of soul, to true peace of heart in this world, and to the final and eternal happiness of heaven.

But our Lord gives us a further inducement, besides that which is directly and immediately afforded by His example, for the practice of humility both inwardly and in our outward conduct and demeanour. He has so closely associated Himself with His followers, nay, with each member of the human race, that He has made every man His representative; so that, for instance, it is impossible to be harsh, or unkind, or insolent to the poorest beggar in the street, without incurring the guilt of being harsh, or unkind, or insolent to our Lord Himself. "As often as ye did it to the least of My brethren, ye did it unto Me." This is the plain teaching of the gospel, which neither you nor I, nor any one else, has authority to alter. No man living, however humble and obscure his position may be, is outside the pale and protection of this divine sanction, against which no other plea than that of ignorance or forgetfulness can avail. And we at any rate shall never be able to plead ignorance of this elementary truth of practical Christianity. We think perchance, when we have amused ourselves at the expense of another, whether of one of our companions, or of any one whatsoever, that we have reason to congratulate ourselves on having had "a good time," and on having, perhaps, rather distinguished ourselves. Whether we *have* distinguished ourselves, and how, we shall learn when we stand, as each one of us must one day stand, before our Judge, to hear the words: "So long as ye did it to the least of My brethren," whether for good or for evil, "ye did it unto Me," and to receive our reward or our punishment accordingly.

In this respect, as has been seen, our Lord associates Himself more especially with the poor and the despised, with children, the sick, the afflicted, and so forth, these being, in the common estimation of men, the least among His brethren; and blessed shall we be if we can but learn to see in them our Divine Saviour Himself, and to be kind and merciful to Him in them. But after another fashion He also associates Himself with every holder of legitimate authority. For, notwithstanding the lowliness of His life on earth, He was, and is, and ever will be, the Lord and Master of mankind. And all lawful authority here on earth is derived from Him, and is to be held in respect as delegated by Him. On this point, again, the teaching of the New Testament is perfectly clear and explicit. Both St Peter and St Paul in their Epistles declare that obedience and respect are due to every one who may be placed over us, according to the nature and limitations of his office, as to Christ, who is the common Master of us all, and from whom alone we look for our reward. And as regards ecclesiastical authorities more particularly, that is to say, bishops and priests, and all who are engaged in the work of the sacred ministry, our Lord's words are as plain as they are simple: "He that heareth you, heareth Me, and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." For He knew very well that the ministers of His word would be despised and contemned, as He was despised and contemned, by many of those to whom they would announce the unwelcome gospel of self-denial and self-renunciation. And so He bade them not to be discouraged when this should happen: "If the world

hateth you," He said, "know that it hath first hated Me. If you were of the world, the world would love what is its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember," He goes on, "the word which I spake unto you: The servant is not greater than his Master. . . . If they have kept My word, they will keep yours also." * And strong in this assurance of the support of his Divine Master, St Paul, who cannot find language strong enough to express his sense of his own personal unworthiness, nevertheless abates no jot of his authority when his mission is called in question and his ministry thwarted. *Pro Christo legatione fungimur*—"We are ambassadors for Christ," he writes to his Corinthian converts, reminding them that a slight upon the envoy is a slight upon the sovereign whom he represents. And precisely the same may be said of every priest in the exercise of his appointed ministry.

It has seemed well to put these simple truths before you because, in the world outside, thoughtful men who are not even Catholics deplore what they call the decay of reverence and the growth of the spirit of insubordination, which (though they do not seem to be aware of the fact) is an inevitable outcome of the adoption of Protestant principles by the country at large; and because we do well to be on our guard lest the same decay of reverence and the same spirit of insubordination should find a place among us, who will not, as has been said, be able to plead ignorance our excuse. The best that we should be able to say would be that we knew perfectly well the teaching of

* St John xv, 18 ff.

our Lord and His Apostles and of the Church on the subject of humility and obedience, but that on the whole we preferred our own judgment, our own self-gratification, to the gospel and the law of Christ; or, in other words, that we allowed ourselves to be fooled and carried away by our own self-will and self-conceit.

Moreover, what has been said may be perhaps especially appropriate on the eve of our Christmas holidays. So long as we are at school, the discipline of the establishment ensures at least a certain measure of external respect for those who are in authority over us; and for many boys an almost mechanical practice of obedience does but indicate what is for them the line of least resistance. But at home we are necessarily left more to ourselves and to our own initiative. And for this very reason our holidays, instead of being intervals during which our spiritual life may reasonably be expected to grow somewhat slack, are on the contrary full of opportunities for strengthening our character as earnest Christians, and for doing of our own free will many things which at school were matters of compulsion or routine. Nor is there any matter in which we may more profitably turn to good account the greater liberty which we shall enjoy during this coming vacation than in the voluntary exercise of humility and obedience.

XI

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS *

"And the Angel said to them: Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" —ST LUKE ii. 10, 11.

TO-DAY we are all wishing one another "A Happy Christmas." Such a wish is easily expressed. Often enough its expression is a mere convention of politeness, to which no very definite meaning is attached. Sometimes it does not mean quite the right thing—that is to say, the happiness or joy which we have in mind is something more or less remote from the joy of which the angel spoke to the shepherds. And so there may be food for reflection and for profitable self-questioning even in the simple words of our Christmas greeting.

We, too, the clergy of the Catholic Church, all the world over, wish to you, the faithful of the same Catholic Church, "A Happy Christmas." And you would naturally and rightly expect that a priest's good wishes should be not merely superficial and conven-

* Christmas Day, 1906. Preached in the Church of St Peter, Stonyhurst.

tional, but altogether hearty and sincere, thoroughly definite, and — above all — entirely Christian in their significance. And assuredly the kind of joy which we wish you is that which in very deed Christ came to bring. And of what kind is that joy, and how does it differ from such joy as is the portion of worldly men and women? True Christian joy differs from worldly joy, in that worldly joy is founded on present possession, or present gratification, or the present experience of what men call "a good time," whereas the joy which our Lord came to bring is founded on the secure hope of an eternal future of unalloyed and unspeakable happiness, or, in other words, of "a good eternity." And this hope, in the fullest measure, is his alone who keeps himself free from that evil from which Christ came to deliver us, the evil of sin. Christ our Lord came into His own world at Bethlehem with His hands full of gifts. The gifts which He brings are, however, not those of temporal prosperity, but of eternal life, and of that grace and fellowship with Him which we need in order to attain to eternal life.

Let there be no mistake about this. The wealthiest millionaire is poor indeed if he lacks the grace and fellowship of Christ. The poorest beggar in the street is indeed rich if he does but possess this priceless boon. And the joys of Christmas are rightfully his, for all his poverty and distress. Nay rather, they are his by a special right. For Christ our Lord did not come to bring a special blessing to the rich and prosperous as such. Indeed, if they are to deserve His blessing at all it must be by recognising that, in His sight and estimation, wealth and temporal pros-

perity, learning and culture, and the outward polish which often go with these things, simply do not count at all, nay, that they may all too easily become an obstacle and a hindrance, rather than a help towards the attainment of the good things which He came to put within our reach. He would be born, as we cannot too often remind ourselves, not merely of poor parentage, but at a time when His mother and His foster-father were far from home, and in a place where no room could be found for them, so that they had to take refuge in a wayside stable; and moreover on the occasion of a general census, so that He might from the first hour of His human life on earth be formally enrolled in the ranks of the poor. And all this He did in order to bring home to us the lesson, so hard to learn, that His choicest blessings are for the poor, the weak, the despised, the afflicted; and it is only by recognising that, whatever our wealth or our attainments, we are but as children, poor and weak, and of ourselves of little account, that we can deserve a full share in His blessings. Joy, then, for the poor, because the poorest of them may be rich in Him. Joy for the little ones, because they are of great price in His eyes. Joy for the weak, because they may be strong in Him. Joy for the despised, because they are held in high honour by Him. Joy for the afflicted, because they have in Him their sure comfort. Joy for all of these, because their poverty, their weakness, their obscurity, their affliction here and now, if only they be turned to good account, contain the germs of everlasting happiness hereafter. And is there then no genuine Christmas joy for the rich and the prosperous? O yes, for them too there

is joy, if only they will acknowledge, not merely in theory but in act, that their share of the good things of this world is but a sacred charge committed to them to be employed according to the will of Him who is the Lord and Master of us all, learned or simple, rich or poor, and not as possessions to be squandered at will upon our own self-indulgence, and according to our own caprice. And this acknowledgment, otherwise so difficult, they will the more readily make as, in company with the poor and the little ones of Christ, they kneel in adoration before the Master's crib.

Does this, perchance, seem to you too stern a doctrine for Christmas morning? Better a stern truth than a meaningless platitude, or deceptive words of flattery. "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy." Of great joy "that shall be to all the people," but most especially to the poor. And yet, even they need a warning, lest by contenting themselves with the lesser joys of earth they should forfeit that great joy, that heavenly joy, which the angel announced. It is not a great joy that can be summed up in the pleasures of an afternoon, or of a week-end, or of a Bank holiday. The great joy of which the angel spoke is one that should be life-long, a joy which —as was said just now—has for its condition our deliverance from that evil from which our Lord came to set us free, and our possession of that gift which He came to bring, the gift of His holy grace and fellowship.

May this joy be yours and mine to-day, and every day of our lives. May this joy sweeten for all of us the poverty, the hardships, the labours, the pains, the

disappointments and disillusionments some share of which, whatever our state of life may be, none of us can altogether escape, but which Christ, our Saviour and our Lord, has taught us not to shrink from, but rather to cherish as the means of drawing us nearer to Him who came to share our troubles with us. Ours will be a happy Christmas if it is a hallowed Christmas. And it is a hallowed, a holy and happy Christmas that from our hearts we should wish one another to-day.

XII

GENEROSITY IN WORK*

"But about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he said to them: Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say to him: Because no man hath hired us. He said to them: Go ye also into my vineyard"—ST MATT. xx. 6, 7.†

THE parable of the labourers in the vineyard, from which the text is taken, is one that presents many difficulties of interpretation. But this much at least is clear, that in its primary significance it has to do with what may be called "spiritual idleness," that is to say, slackness in all that concerns the salvation and sanctification of our own souls and the souls of other men. And this kind of idleness or slackness is, of course, quite compatible with a good deal of either bodily or mental activity, or both. A man may be very keen about breaking a record in some department of athletics; he may be an enthusiastic motorist, a notable sportsman, an intrepid explorer; or again he may be a shrewd and successful man of business, or a distinguished scholar, or an eminent authority on matters of physical science, and yet he

* January 27, 1907 (Septuagesima).

† From the Gospel of the day.

may at the same time be as idle as it is possible to be in the affairs of his soul, in the very existence of which it may be that he professes not to believe.

To-day, however, I propose to speak not of idleness and diligence in spiritual or religious matters alone, but of idleness and diligence in general; for although not every kind of diligence is good and pleasing to God, since there may be diligence even in wrong-doing, it is unquestionably true that every kind of idleness is bad and displeasing to Him. "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat bread";* such is the sentence passed by a divine decree on the whole race of fallen mankind. "If a man will not work," says St Paul, "neither let him eat."† "He that pursueth idleness," we are told in the Book of Proverbs, "is exceeding foolish."‡ And more explicitly our Lord Himself assures us that we shall have to render an account to Him as our Judge, not only of idleness in point of action, but of "every idle word."§ And an "idle word" is very sensibly defined, by St Ignatius of Loyola, as a word which is neither intended nor of its nature calculated to benefit, whether spiritually or temporally, either the man who utters it or him to whom it is spoken, or any one else. So much for the mere fact that idleness is displeasing to God; and if we were perfectly reasonable beings, which we are not, the knowledge of this fact alone should be enough to stir us to a laudable diligence.

But it will be to our purpose to look a little more closely into the matter, and to inquire *why* it is

* Gen. iii. 19. † 2 Thess. iii. 10. ‡ Prov. iii. 11.
§ St Matt. xii. 36.

God's will that we should work, and *why* idleness is displeasing to Him. And we may profitably consider these questions with special relation to our present condition as schoolboys. God wishes us to work now, in the first place because it is part, and a most important part, of our duty to our parents that we should do so. They send us here at considerable expense, sometimes at the cost of no small sacrifice to themselves, in order that we may fit ourselves, not for a sort of vegetative life of inglorious ease, but for some profession or business, or, in the case of some few among us, for the carrying out of a vocation to the priesthood or the religious life. And we are certainly not fitting ourselves for the creditable pursuit of any profession or business whatsoever, and still less for the priesthood, by being slack in the days of our youth.

But you may say: "I don't see any connection between my work here, or between certain portions of my work here, and my profession hereafter. I hope to be a distinguished stockbroker, or a distinguished lawyer, or a still more distinguished officer, and in none of these capacities (or incapacities, as the case may turn out to be) shall I have to carry on this or that branch of study on which I am engaged here." Very likely not; but whatever it is that you are studying, you are learning something far more valuable than the particular subject which for the moment engages your attention. You are learning to do something which you will have to do in any profession under the sun, and that is, to apply your mind, to concentrate it on the matter in hand, or in plain words, to work. You will have to work

hereafter, and it is here that you are learning, or ought to be learning, that most valuable—nay, that indispensable—art.

But again, one or other of you may say: "My people are so wealthy, or in such easy circumstances, that I shall not have to work for my living hereafter; why, then, should I work now?" Well, it may be assumed that if your "people" had not wished you to work, they would not have sent you here, or at any rate that, having sent you here, it is their wish that you should conform to the general laws of the establishment. And one of the quite indispensable laws of the establishment is that we should work. If you were to ask Father Rector to exempt you from the study of Greek, or of Chinese, or of logarithms, or from learning to play the ophicleide, you might have some chance of success; but if you were to ask him to exempt you from work, you would only be requested to close the door on the outside. And since it is God's will that we should obey not our parents alone but all our lawful superiors, it is God's will for every one of us that we should work, and work seriously, at school.

But these are far from being the only reasons why we should avoid idleness. Idleness, or slackness, which is a milder form of idleness, all but infallibly exposes a boy, or a man, to temptation. And although temptation, when it comes upon us without fault of our own, may be and ought to be to us an occasion of merit, our plain duty is to do what we can to keep it at arm's length. "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection," * says St Paul in the

* 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Epistle of to-day's Mass, words which show that even the great Apostle did not deem himself secure from the attacks of the enemy. And, for us, one of the very best, most appropriate, and most efficient means for keeping the body in subjection is the discipline of work. Nor would it be a reasonable or sufficient answer for anyone to say that under present circumstances he does not experience any grave temptation, and that therefore the discipline of work is not necessary for him, personally, by way of safeguard. It would be a mischievous delusion to trust to any such plea as this. We none of us know what may be in store for us, in the way of temptation, during the course of the next few years. Or rather, we may be very sure that, unless we take the right means for our self-protection, we most certainly shall be tempted, and tempted severely. The sort of men who escape severe temptation are just those who guard themselves by means of constant diligence. We cannot flatter ourselves that we are stronger in our good resolutions than was St Peter on the night on which he denied our Lord. And yet he fell. Not, certainly, while he was hard at work, but while he was standing at the fire and warming himself in the midst of a crowd of gossiping soldiers and servants.

Therefore, for God's sake and our own, we shall do well to get rid of any habit which we may have acquired of lounging and loitering about, doing "nothing in particular." Not all the blue blood of the Plantagenets, nor all the heaped-up millions of a Jay Gould, can afford an excuse for joining the ever-growing ranks of the unemployed, or for allowing ourselves to acquire the slouching habits and fashions

of the street-corner man. You remember the three rules which a shrewd American writer lays down for the commercial traveller in dealing with his customers: (1) "Have something to say"; (2) "Say it"; (3) "Stop talking." Somewhat on these lines we may formulate three rules for the use of our time, viz.: (1) "Have something to do"; (2) "Do it"; (3) "Do something else." The habit of passing briskly from one employment to another cannot be too highly commended. In this respect, at least, we may all reasonably wish to belong to the "progressive" party.

But let us rise to something higher than these paltry domesticities. We may well adopt, as a brief yet comprehensive programme or motto for life in relation to God: "Unbounded generosity and unbounded confidence." And this programme or motto fits well with that text from St Paul in which the Apostle sets forth Christ crucified as the central topic of all Christian preaching and teaching, and which was chosen at the outset as indicating the leading theme of our meditations throughout this present school year. For our confidence, as we are repeatedly reminded in the New Testament, is in Christ crucified; and it is the memory of our Lord's passion and death that more than anything else should stir us to generosity. And for our present purpose we may very profitably bring these thoughts to bear on the subject of work. A life of work for our Lord's sake is a most acceptable offering to Him who, being God, took upon Himself our human nature, and, not content with being, for our instruction and encouragement, "poor and in labours from His youth," * would

* Ps. lxxxvii. 16.

deliver up His life in unspeakable torments for our redemption. Shall we set any limits to our generosity towards Him who has been so generous towards us? Shall we think that we are making an adequate return for His love if we spend a few minutes, daily, in prayer, forgetting that the sincerity of our prayers should be able to stand the test of action in accordance with the words that we utter with our lips? "Not every one that saith to Me: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." * And for us, the will of our Father who is in heaven is that we should work, strenuously and perseveringly.

If, perchance, "no man hath hired us," that is to say, if merely human motives are insufficient to rouse us out of our natural indolence, we may be helped, it may be by the remembrance that our Lord Himself would employ us in His vineyard. The Church has need, urgent need, at the present day, of earnest and strenuous workers. In view of the evils which afflict the Church in France, and which threaten us here at home, it would be a sad thing if any boy or young man should leave this college with the idea that piety is the whole of religion, and that our Lord has no use for his active service, or no claims upon it. And by "claims" must here be understood, not merely obligations in the narrower sense of the term, but such considerations as should appeal to that unselfish generosity which carries a man far beyond the limits of strict duty, which leads him to ask himself, not how little he can safely "get off" with, but rather,

* St Matt. vii. 21.

whether, perchance, there is anything more that he can do for our Lord, who has never stinted in what He has done for us.

And if we must needs have mercenary motives even for our generosity, remember those words, occurring in the parable of the good Samaritan: *Quidquid superogaveris, ego, cum rediero, reddam tibi*—"Whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I on my return will repay thee."* Our grasp of Catholic doctrine is very incomplete if we do not recognise, as lying beyond and outside the narrow fence of strict duty, that wide field which lies open for what are called works of supererogation, for an earnestness and a voluntary diligence over and above what is imposed on us by any law that binds under penalties for default. Love, that true and genuine love which is before all things unselfish, which seeks to give and to serve without looking for any other reward than that of pleasing the recipient of its gifts and services,—love such as this ought, if we be truly generous, to be our disposition towards God, and towards our Lord Jesus Christ, God made Man. We *ought* to serve Him without troubling ourselves with the question: *Quid ego erit nobis?*—"What, then, shall be our recompense?"† But such is our Lord's generosity that He assuredly will not allow our generosity to outdo His. And such is His knowledge of our weakness and pusillanimity that He takes care to assure us that this is so. *Quidquid supererogaveris, ego, cum rediero, reddam tibi.* We need never be afraid of being too generous to Him who has been and is and ever will be so generous to us. And one of the ways

* St Luke x. 35. † St Matt. xix. 27.

in which we can best show our generosity to Him is by diligence in all that we do, whether in the discharge of our duty, or as a matter of voluntary enterprise, for His sake. If we will but take this lesson to heart we shall never, either at school or at home, either in the days of our pupilage or in those of our emancipation, deserve to hear that question addressed to ourselves: "Why stand ye here all the day idle?"

XIII

GENEROSITY IN ENDURANCE*

"And He said to me: My grace is sufficient for thee, for power is made perfect in infirmity. Gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me"—2 COR. xii. 8, 9.†

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY, as a glance at the Missal will show, is very closely connected, in the Roman liturgy, with the memory of St Paul. At the commencement of the Mass for the day will be found the superscription: *Statio ad S. Paulum;* which means that on this day the Pope was accustomed to celebrate the Pontifical Mass in the basilica of St Paul, outside the walls of Rome; and in the collect—a thing quite exceptional in a Sunday Mass—St Paul is again mentioned by name. The lesson, too, which is an unusually long one, is taken from that portion of the second Epistle to the Corinthians, in which the Apostle is engaged, not in imparting Christian doctrine as such, but in recounting his own spiritual experiences. Indeed it may be remarked in passing that this letter, together with the Epistle to the Galatians,

* February 3, 1907 (Sexagesima).

† From the Epistle of the day.

may be regarded as St Paul's *Apologia pro vita sua*, his self-vindication against the open accusations and covert insinuations of those mischief-makers who, misled perhaps, in part, by an ill-directed zeal, had striven to undermine his influence, and to shake the confidence of the faithful in him who had brought them under the yoke of Christ.

In the course of his self-vindication, the Apostle takes occasion to speak of those many trials and sufferings which it had been his lot, as it has been the lot of all great and truly successful workers for God, to undergo. Perils and persecutions from Jews and Gentiles; perils from the jealousies and intrigues of false brethren; stripes and imprisonment; the hardships and dangers of his missionary voyages and journeys; his constant anxiety and solicitude for the many churches which depended on his ministrations; the sorrows and disappointments arising from the sins and faults and shortcomings of so many of the members of those churches; and last of all that heavy trial which he calls "the sting of the flesh." This phrase has often been interpreted as though it signified sensual temptations, but it almost certainly should be understood, rather, of severe physica pain, a bodily disease with which the Apostle was afflicted, and from which, as he tells us, he repeatedly prayed to be delivered.

It was a petition in appearance most reasonable. No one can doubt that St Paul, of all men, desired, as he himself tells us, to spend himself and to be spent in the service of his Divine Master. It could hardly occur to any one to accuse St Paul of cowardice. And indeed it was assuredly no lack of courage,

but simply his ardent desire to labour to the utmost for God and for souls, which made him beg so earnestly to be delivered from an infirmity which, as he believed, must needs hamper and hinder his work. Nevertheless, his petition, as we know, was not granted, and from the very explicit answer which he received in response to it, even this great teacher of men himself learned a new lesson concerning the spiritual efficacy of suffering. The answer, as reported by himself, was this: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for power," or, as the Greek original has it, "My power (ἡ δύναμίς μου) is made perfect in infirmity." The meaning is, in substance, that the power of God, working through human instruments or agents, is more fully and more conspicuously manifested when the human agent is weak, and in the eyes of the world contemptible and of no account, than when he is strong and prosperous. Nor is it so difficult, after all, to account for this. For in the first place there can be no doubt that, in the influence of man upon man, it is character, rather than outward and visible success, that tells in the long run. And it is equally beyond doubt that pain and suffering, by bringing into play and exercising a man's patience and power of endurance, strengthen and develop his character; provided only (and this is a very important proviso) that he does not, by giving way under the trial, allow his infirmities to develop his selfishness instead. Who can doubt that men were far more deeply impressed by the example of Jean Vianney, the Curé of Ars, working as he did with indefatigable zeal in spite of his continual ill-health, than if he had been hale and hearty? Who can doubt that the

example of Damien gained immeasurably in force from the fact that he was himself at last smitten with the terrible disease of leprosy to which he had for so many years ministered, and to which even under his affliction he continued to minister, in others? Our own late Provincial, Father Reginald Colley, whose anniversary occurs a few days hence, might certainly have done more work, as men measure work, if he had enjoyed vigorous health, and had lived many years longer. But that which makes his memory so inexpressibly dear, I will not say to you, but to those of us who are old enough to have had the privilege of knowing him as he was, that which makes the retrospect of his example so stimulating and encouraging, is the remembrance that in spite of so much suffering he still struggled on, ever stern to himself, ever most tenderly considerate for others, till a sudden death in the midst of his labours served to stamp indelibly upon our hearts the image of a great and noble character. Even so it is that the power of God, His power in the moral order, His power over the souls of men, is "made perfect," or more fully manifested, in and through our human infirmities.

Nor only so. We all carry about with us the taproot of pride, which even in good men is ever striving to push forth its shoots and branches, and then to choke and overshadow the growth of the Christlike virtues in our heart and in our conduct. After we have become emancipated from the degrading slavery under which those men lie who habitually give way to the lower passions; after we have with God's grace shaken ourselves free from the grosser kinds of temptation; there is nothing that so hinders

the work of God in our own souls, nothing that so infallibly spoils the efficacy of any work which it may be our privilege to be allowed to do for others, as pride; that pride which is all the more dangerous because its attacks are so insidious, and because it may come to form a prominent and even a predominant feature in our character almost without our being aware of it. And on the other hand there is nothing that so takes down our pride and self-sufficiency, nothing that so effectively brings home to us our inability to do anything of ourselves without the help of God, as pain, suffering, sorrow, disappointment, adversity of one kind or another. So long as all goes smoothly with us, it is extremely difficult to rid ourselves of the fallacious notion that we ourselves are the prime agents in the drama of our own lives, like the fly on the axle-box of the coach, who persuaded himself that it was his exertion that made the wheels go round. But when we receive a check, when in some very tangible fashion we are made to feel our weakness and our absolute dependence on God; and when, at the same time, perhaps, we are led to see to how great an extent we had unconsciously trusted to ourselves; then is our opportunity for the cultivation of that true humility which is the indispensable conditions under which alone we can hope to do anything considerable for the service of our Divine Master. St Ignatius Loyola showed a shrewd knowledge of human nature, as well as a keen spiritual insight, when he bade men pray rather for humiliations than for humility, knowing that the former, if borne with the right dispositions, would surely lead to the latter. It is in the hour of a man's

weakness or adversity that—if only he is a faithful and earnest servant—the power of God is most surely and fully made manifest in him.

And this, we may be sure, was one of the reasons, among many, why Jesus Christ Himself, our Divine Master and Exemplar, deliberately chose to live, as Man, a life of poverty and hardship and toil and suffering, and to end it with a death which, to all human appearances, would have seemed to set the seal of final and irremediable failure on all His efforts. His life and death should teach us, far more efficaciously than any experience of His servant Paul, the great lesson that the power of God is made apparent in and through human weakness; that the way to the highest moral victories lies, for the most part at least, through physical defeat; that the way to the fullest realisation of everlasting glory and triumph lies for the most part through temporal adversity.

All this being so, can we wonder that not only the canonised and acknowledged saints, but multitudes of earnest and devoted Christians in all ages of the Church's history, have prayed, and prayed fervently, that they too might be counted worthy of a share in the Cross of Christ, or that they rejoiced, like St Paul, and gave heartfelt thanks to God, when the cross, perhaps in some quite unexpected form, was laid upon their shoulders. Nay, is it too much to hope that some of us may feel ourselves moved to ask that, like Simon of Cyrene, we too may have the privilege of helping to bear the cross, and to thank God when, in some small measure, our petition is granted? We are only schoolboys, it is true, and the period of hard

trials for the most part has not come for us. But if we are as yet too young and too weak to bear a heavy cross, we are neither too young nor too weak to begin at least to form brave resolutions, and to take to heart sound principles of life and conduct. And among these sound principles is this, that there is room, and that there are motives in abundance, for generosity to our Lord, not only, as we have already seen, in strenuous labour, but also in courageous endurance.

The lessons of the Cross of Christ are lessons which no man can be expected thoroughly to master till after long years of experience; and therefore we need not be at all surprised if in the days of our youth we find them difficult and obscure, and if they often escape our memory amid the wear and tear and the many legitimate occupations and inevitable distractions of our lives. Nay, it would be no matter for surprise if on a first hearing we should be tempted to regard these lessons as a kind of foolishness. But as the knowledge that to worldly minded men the preaching of the cross was sheer folly did not hinder St Paul from delivering his message; as the knowledge that much of it would fall by the wayside or on stony ground did not hinder the Divine Sower (of whom we read in to-day's Gospel) from scattering the seed of the word broadcast upon the soil, whether fertile or barren, of men's hearts; so, too, it must needs be with every Christian teacher, who, in his own small measure should be able to say with the great Apostle: *Non erubesco Evangelium*—"I am not ashamed of the Gospel,"*

* Rom. i. 16.

the Gospel of the Cross. For while he knows that in many instances the divine message will pass unheeded, he knows also that in others it will take root and bear fruit "thirty-fold, sixty-fold, or an hundred-fold." *

This then is the message, or a selected portion of the message, which to-day's Epistle conveys to us; that if only we are faithful, if only we keep our courage and hold fast to our hope, the power of God will work its effects in and through us, more surely and more efficaciously in our hours of trial and apparent weakness, than in our longer and more normal periods of prosperity and strength. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity."

* St Mark iv. 8.

XIV

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS*

"And they understood none of these things, and this word was hidden from them, and they understood not the things that were said"—ST LUKE xviii. 34.†

THE Gospel of Quinquagesima Sunday records, in the words of St Luke, the healing of a blind man which took place towards the close of our Lord's last journey to Jerusalem. And the narrative of the miracle occurs appropriately at this particular point of St Luke's Gospel, because it follows immediately on a very striking instance of spiritual blindness on the part of the Apostles themselves. When our Lord had more than once foretold to His disciples, in language that seems to us as plain as possible, the sufferings and cruel death which He was to undergo, they did not—as the text informs us—comprehend or take in the meaning of His words; the eyes of their understanding were held; and the truth so clearly expressed was "hidden from them." "And He said to them: Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished that

* February 10, 1907 (Quinquagesima).

† From the Gospel of the day.

were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man; for He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged Him they will put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again. *And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said.*"

Now if the Apostles, on whose training our Lord had bestowed so much loving care during a period of nearly three years, were yet so blind to the true significance of His teaching, we need not be surprised or discouraged if we find ourselves afflicted with the like spiritual blindness; if we do not take in all at once even the most elementary of the lessons to be learned from the Cross of Christ; if what we have heard about generosity in work and generosity in endurance for our Lord's sake "does not"—as the saying goes—"appeal to us" on a first hearing. It is not too late to begin to think about these subjects, just as though we had never been invited and encouraged to think of them before. "And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said." So it was with the Apostles, within a week of our Lord's passion. Yet He did not, therefore, abandon the task of instructing them, nor did He repent of His intention of laying down His life for such apparently unpromising disciples.

But indeed, even though it were far otherwise with us; even though our minds had been enlightened and our hearts kindled to fervour by our meditations on the sufferings of Christ; even so, we

should still have reason to deplore our spiritual blindness. Nay, it is safe to venture on the apparent paradox that, the deeper is a man's insight into the truths of faith, the more keenly conscious does he become of the dulness of his spiritual vision; just as the most eminent men of science are far more fully and explicitly aware than ordinary mortals like ourselves of the abysmal depths of their own ignorance. And if perchance any of us should be so benighted as to imagine that he has nothing new to learn about Christ crucified, he, at any rate, is in most urgent need of light. And while on the one hand we ought not to be discouraged by our slowness of apprehension, on the other hand we ought by no means to acquiesce in it, but on the contrary to clamour with all the strength of our hearts, as the blind man in the Gospel clamoured with all the strength of his voice, for our cure.

For there has, perhaps, never been an age in the world's history more abjectly in need of the lessons of Christ's cross than our own. It is an age, not—like the sixteenth century—of conspicuous scoundrels and equally conspicuous saints, but pre-eminently of respectable mediocrity; an age in which the better sort of men are, on the whole, respectably good, while the worst preserve a kind of outward respectability even in their badness. To behave just as everyone else behaves is looked on as a sort of *beau idéal* of conduct, as though the nineteenth century had left us, by way of legacy, a new beatitude: "Blessed is he that is precisely like his neighbour, for he shall be as middling as the rest." It is a mean ideal this slavery to a kind of tacit convention

of middling excellence; a slavery from which we shall all do well, as far as may be, to emancipate ourselves. It was not by this sort of obsequious observance of use and wont that the Curé d' Ars (to take a modern instance) became a great saint. Indeed the question that in the earlier days of his ministry was always being asked about him by those highly respectable parish-priests, his neighbours, was just this: "Why can't he do like everybody else?" Why should he spend half the night in the church, while other folk were snug in bed? Why should he live on cold potatoes and prayer, instead of fitting himself for his work, as other men did, by an adequate consumption of beef and mutton? Why should he teach catechism to poor children for an hour every day, when his neighbours were quite content with half an hour once a week, and still more content, perhaps, to escape even that task if they could? Or again: "Does he think he is a saint?" No, he did not think he was a saint; but, what was much more to the purpose, he *was* one. And he became one, not by making it his ambition to do as others did, but by striking out his own line with a holy independence; an independence of popular opinion which was perfectly compatible with the most exact obedience, and with the utmost docility towards those who had legitimate authority over him, even though they might be far inferior to himself in virtue. If he had paid attention to the captious carping of his self-constituted critics, he would have succeeded in becoming precisely what they were, a respectable mediocrity; and we certainly should not have been reading his "Life" in this chapel every morning.

And what was the interior difference between him and them that made his external conduct also so different? It was just this, that he had a clear apprehension of truths that were hidden from them, or only dimly perceived by them. The eyes of his soul had been opened to see Christ crucified, and to understand, as other men did not understand, what the crucifixion of Christ meant for him. And seeing this, seeing the boundless generosity and the boundless love of our Lord for him and for every soul of man, he shaped and measured his conduct, not by the consideration of what was usual or fashionable, or of what his neighbours did, or of what any man (not having authority over him) might say or think, but solely in accordance with his own personal and unshakable determination to work to the utmost and to endure to the utmost in the service of his Divine Master.

And this emancipating spirit of generosity will in a measure be ours, too, if only we can win by our prayers the grace to see and understand what the Cross of Christ means for each one of us. For this is the difference between the spiritually blind and those who have the divine gift of vision in regard of the real significance of the mystery of our Lord's passion and death. The blind, by an almost irresistible—because half unconscious—inclination or impulse, march with the crowd and follow the stream of average humanity. But one whose eyes have been opened sees the Cross of Christ towering high above the crowd, not merely as a material object which anyone can behold with his bodily eyes, but as bearing the living yet dying figure of One who

has a message for him, an invitation for him, who makes an appeal to him, personally and individually; a message, an invitation, an appeal stirring him to do and to suffer for his crucified Lord, not what others do or seem to do and to suffer, but as much as he can. *Quant je puis*—"As much as I can," in prayer, in work, in abstention from pleasant things, in endurance of things painful, in charity and mercy to the afflicted members of Christ's flock, such must needs be the response of one whose eyes have been opened to see and understand in some degree the mystery of the Cross.

"And it came to pass, when He drew nigh to Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what it meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And they that went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace; but he cried out much more: Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus standing, commanded him to be brought unto Him; and when he was come near, He asked him, saying: What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said: Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him: Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole." If only we would have the sense to acknowledge our spiritual blindness, and in particular our blindness (like that of the Apostles in their half-trained state) concerning the doctrine of the Cross, and very humbly to place ourselves by the wayside in company with that poor man in the Gospel, and to plead importunately for the gift of sight; our

eyes would at last be opened to see and understand the claims of Christ crucified on our generosity and our confidence, to see and understand how immeasurably we have hitherto fallen short of what we might have done for Him.

Meanwhile, even in our present blindness, let us trust ourselves in all things to His unseen guidance, confident that if we are but true to our conscience, and faithful to the inspirations of His grace, the day will surely come when our eyes will be opened to see many things that now are obscure to us or altogether hidden from us. And we may if we will make our own this prayer-poem in which an effort has been made to express some at least of the thoughts that have occupied us of late.

In boyhood's days my Guide unseen,
My Guide be Thou through manhood's years;
Thou leading, sure no foolish fears
Shall fright me, though the strife be keen.

Though I be weak, Thou say'st it, still
In weakness most Thy power is shown;
I have no strength that is mine own;
But Thine be mine, to work Thy will.

Though I be blind, yet Thou for me
Wilt trace the path, and fix the goal;
And, Heart to heart and Soul to soul
Speaking, wilt bid me cleave to Thee.

Close in Thy footsteps let me tread:
Since Thou hast trod the ways of pain,
In pain is peace, in loss is gain,
And health in wounds, since Thou hast bled.

Mine be the bliss all Thine to be;
    Mine be the joy Thy pains to share;
    My heart, my love, be nailèd there
Where Thou wert nailèd first for me.

Mary! the sword that pierced thee through,
    What time thou stood'st beneath the rood,
    To thee, to me, wrought highest good,
Through thy Son's tender love and true.

Teach me that wisdom thou didst learn,
    Mother of Sorrows, while He died,
    Scourged, and thorn-crowned, and crucified;
Thou canst each cross to blessing turn.

A man's full task, with manful will,
    Teach me, dear Mother, to essay:
    Yet at thy knees, till death, to pray,
My childhood's *Aves* lisping still.*

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* These verses appeared in the *Stonyhurst Magazine*, February 1907, under the title: "At the Parting of the Ways: A Youth's Petitions."

XV

DANGEROUS DAY-DREAMS *

"Again, the devil took Him up into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him: All these will I give Thee, if, falling down, Thou wilt adore me"—ST MATT. iv. 8, 9.†

IN the Gospel of Quinquagesima Sunday, our Lord was set before us in the act of restoring sight to a blind man who, with great earnestness and importunity, had implored His mercy. And the miracle, as we saw reason to believe, was plainly intended to symbolise our need of spiritual enlightenment, especially with regard to the less welcome truths of our faith, and to teach us how this grace of enlightenment may be obtained, viz., by means of earnest and persevering prayer. And now, in to-day's Gospel, we read of the devil, the enemy of man's salvation, not indeed giving sight to the blind, but filling the eyes with a false and delusive vision. "Again the devil took Him up into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him: All these will I give Thee, if, falling down, Thou wilt adore me."

* February 17, 1907 (First Sunday in Lent).

† From the Gospel of the day.

Has it ever occurred to you to observe that this is precisely the deception which the devil is daily endeavouring to practise upon us? Of course, in dealing with ordinary folk, he does not usually go to work on the grand scale. The whole world is rather a "large order," as we might say; and the prospect of it is too vast and vague and distant to stir our ambition. Our horizon is more limited; and our enemy has no need to take us to the top of "a very high mountain," when some little paltry hillock of pride and self-conceit is quite sufficient for his purpose.

The devil is a very skilful scene-painter. The "room of state in the castle at Elsinore" * in which we found ourselves quite at home, with an occasional ghost for company, the other evening, is nothing to the visions which—with the help of our imagination—he can conjure up before us; nothing to the castles in the air which he can teach us to build out of materials even less solid than the deal slats and canvas and paint out of which our stage palaces are constructed. Of course these castles in the air are of very different patterns according to each one's individual tastes. Visions of military glory; visions of parliamentary or forensic triumph (if we happen to know what "forensic" means); visions of sport and amusement; visions of luxury and comfort—plenty to eat and drink, and a minimum of work; visions of travel in which we may indeed see "the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them"; or visions of thrilling adventure, in which the hero's part falls, of

* The allusion is to a performance of "Hamlet" given at Stonyhurst on Shrove Tuesday, February 12, 1907.

course, to ourselves; anything will do. According to our varieties of temperament, any of these things—or others more suitable to ourselves—will serve the ends of the enemy of our souls. "All these things will I give thee, if, falling down, thou will adore me." Of course the tempter is not so silly as to invite one of us, in our present condition, to turn his back altogether on God, and deliberately to swear fealty to himself instead. He is quite content to make our acquaintance by degrees; to be on bowing terms with us, as the first step towards making us his obsequious servants. The sort of castles in the air which have been described are comparatively innocent, and might seem to be at the worst rather foolish. But unquestionably one of the means whereby the devil attempts—and too often successfully attempts—to work mischief in our souls, is an unruly imagination, and the unchecked habit of day-dreaming.

The mischief may, of course, be of very different degrees of gravity. One of the commonest forms of harmful day-dreaming is that in which we are led, by specious visions of the future, to forget the present duty, to neglect the present opportunity. And this even in the case of hopes and ambitions that are in themselves quite laudable. How many excellent people have deluded themselves by imagining all that they *would* do for the Church and the poor if they could, all that they *will* do, please God, "some day"; while in the meantime they quite overlook the invalid at home, or next door, and never give themselves the trouble of thinking whether there are not a score of little acts or words of kindness that would be more than welcome to those among whom they live, pro-

vided only that these acts or words were done or uttered spontaneously.

But this is a comparatively mild form of the disease. Others are far more serious and fatal. We have all heard of dreams of avarice and dreams of social ambition; and that these are no mere copy-book phrases, but stand for very tangible and sad realities, may be learned from scores of books—sermons, works of fiction, and serious essays and treatises—which deal with the evils of our times. For instance, a man conceives the idea that it would be a fine thing to push his way in Society (with a capital S), to be received in the drawing-rooms of great people, and to be invited to dinner by them. Assuming that he is really aiming at something that is rather above his station in life, he will very soon find that his efforts entail an expenditure beyond his means; an expenditure which not only leaves him no margin for helping to relieve the needs, temporal or spiritual, of the poor, but which causes him to inflict cruel hardships on tradespeople and dependents, and perhaps ultimately to defraud them altogether. And in the meantime he neglects his duties to his own family, perhaps even to his own children; while, as to his poor relations, he gives them the "cold shoulder" because they are not what is called "presentable" in the exalted circles in which he now imagines himself to move. And all the while the chances are that he is, in fact, only hanging on to the fringe of "Society," and that one of these days he will be just quietly dropped.

Or a man, like the Prodigal, wants to "see life." He is tired of, and impatient with, the narrowness of his immediate surroundings. He hears the voice of

the tempter: "Your eyes shall be opened and you shall be as a god, knowing the mysteries of life." Conscience of course warns him that there are many things which it is not good to see, or to hear of, or to talk about, or think about, except in so far as a knowledge of these things is for some valid reason really necessary, or useful for some legitimate purpose, but not as a matter of mere morbid curiosity; and that if he yields to the latter he will infallibly be hurried—as the Prodigal was—into the whirlpool of debauchery and evil living. But he listens, rather, to the voice of the tempter; he is charmed with the vision which the tempter spreads out before him; he goes the way of the Prodigal; and only too probably fails to follow him in his return to his father's house.

Or take a more homely example, an instance which is in reality of just the same kind, only on a smaller scale, and which might quite easily occur even in a Catholic school. A boy begins to find himself popular with a certain set whom he rather admires for what may best be described as "swagger" qualities; and almost before he is aware of it he begins to make it his chief aim in life—for the present at least—to increase his popularity. The approbation and good-fellowship of half a dozen congenial companions are to him more than "the kingdoms of the world and all the glory of them." And before long he finds that, if he is to keep on terms with this local "smart set," he must be ready to engage with them in conversation or in proceedings which on various grounds are undesirable, or worse. Conscience whispers: "Stop! Show yourself a man; do not let any one claim your allegiance except Him who alone has a right to it.

Do not be dazzled by the tinsel frippery of a foolish fashion, whether it be a fashion of dress, or of flowers —which deserve, rather, to be called rags and tags— of speech, or of questionable conduct. You were made for something better than this. Now is your opportunity to form and strengthen your character by a true independence, which is as far as possible from any kind of 'swagger' or any kind of insubordination towards lawful authority." But, alas, the voice of conscience is too often unheeded, and imagination too often wins the day, at least for a while; till at last—if we are fortunate—it dawns upon us that we have been following a phantom and have been deluded by a fallacy, and that the fancied good which we had pursued was indeed beneath contempt.

But all this may seem like saying that the imagination is an evil thing. No, the imagination is not an evil thing, any more than wine is an evil thing, or than a mettlesome colt, not yet broken to harness or saddle, is an evil thing. But, like wine, imagination is a thing very liable to abuse; and, like a runaway horse, it can be very mischievous if we surrender ourselves to its uncontrolled wanderings.

Since, however, it is not a bad thing in itself, but is one of our God-given faculties, we may reasonably ask ourselves how it can be turned to good account, and as it were harnessed to His service. And in our search for an answer to this question we may turn for an object-lesson to Catholic countries—to those few regions of the earth yet remaining where the faith is still so strong as to be a potent force in the lives, not of individuals alone, but of the population at large. In such regions there is one characteristic feature

which cannot fail to impress the traveller who has eyes to see and a heart to understand; and that is the ubiquitous presence, and prominence, of the sign of our redemption, the cross or crucifix. Is there a high cliff in the immediate vicinity of a port or fishing village? it has been turned to good account by being made to serve as a Calvary, visible from afar, saluted with devotion by sailors and fishermen whether outward or homeward bound, and venerated as a shrine where the home-staying members of the family pour out their prayers for the absent. On the slopes of the foothills of Alps and Apennines and Pyrenees you will see the mountain paths marked at intervals with tiny chapels or alcoves which serve to shelter the Stations of the Way of the Cross. In the centre of the market-place, crowded and noisy as it may be, the cross stands aloft as a silent reminder of justice and of mercy. Here and there along the roads and lanes a wayside cross will be found, marking, like those in Hodder wood, the site of some fatal accident. And in every home, too, the crucifix holds, as is but right, the place of honour, whether in an oratory, or in the principal chamber, or in some open hall or lobby.

And so it should be with our imagination. There, too, the Cross of Christ should dominate over all other pictured figures. And when we are disposed to indulge in day-dreams, we may well ask ourselves whether the scenes that we conjure up before us are such that the cross or crucifix would be out of place in them; whether the actions which we imagine ourselves to perform are such as could fitly be inaugurated and concluded with that hallowed gesture and those sacred words which we call "the sign of the cross."

XVI

A GLIMPSE OF TRUE GLORY*

"And lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. And the disciples, hearing, fell upon their knees, and were very much afraid. And Jesus came, and touched them, and said to them: Arise and fear not"—ST MATT. xviii. 5-7.†

IN last Sunday's Gospel we read how "the devil took up Jesus into a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." And in the Gospel read yesterday, and —as happens at the Ember seasons—repeated to-day, we are told that "Jesus took Peter and James and John his brother into a high mountain apart; and He was transfigured before them." The parallelism both in fact and in expression is too striking to be set down to a mere fortuitous coincidence; and the very closeness of the parallel serves to make and emphasise a contrast; the contrast between the methods followed and the purposes pursued, on the one hand by Jesus, the soul's true Friend, and on the other hand by the devil, who is our mortal enemy. It is the devil's part, as we have been reminded, to lead us

* February 24, 1907 (Second Sunday in Lent).

† From the Gospel of the day.

up to the heights of pride, in order that he may delude us with false visions of deceptive glory. It is his part to exaggerate and make the most of the showy things of the world; to get us to look upon the biggest army, the most formidable navy, the highest total of imports and exports, or—on an inferior grade—the tallest sky-scraper, the most prodigious pig-market, the most luxurious hotel, the costliest jewels, the most enchanting singer, or the most appetising dinner, as things supremely desirable in themselves, as things capable of affording us full and complete satisfaction, just because they are the biggest, the most formidable, the highest, the tallest, the most prodigious, the most luxurious, the costliest, the most enchanting, or the most appetising, in their several kinds. And it is the devil's part, like a skilful manipulator of "dissolving views," to keep up an unbroken succession of alluring visions or day-dreams or castles in the air, so that, by continually dangling his baubles before our eyes, he may either lure us to our ruin, or at least distract and hinder us from doing all that we might accomplish, if only we were more sedulously on our guard against his deceits. The cloud, of which we heard the other day, that to the obedient fancy of the obsequious courtier resembled a camel, was "backed like a weasel," and yet after all was "very like a whale," is an apt symbol of the wiles whereby the devil seeks to "fool us to the top of our bent," if only we are so silly as to give free play to our imagination, and to suffer ourselves to be ruled by it like children, rather than, as men, by reason, and, as Christians, by faith.

Very different from this is the method and purpose of our Lord. If He from time to time leads men up

into the heights, not of pride but of prayer, it is in order that He may give them a glimpse of the true glory, not of the showy things of life, but of things that are hidden from the gaze of men, of things that are obscure and despised in the common estimation of the worldly minded. And even this He does, not that we may rest in the vision and take delight therein, as St Peter would have done when, enraptured with the splendours of the Transfiguration, he cried aloud: "Lord it is good for us to be here," but in order that the memory of the vision may strengthen us for the endurance of the hard trials of life. When St Peter exclaimed: "Lord it is good for us to be here!" he spoke, as in St Mark's Gospel he afterwards confesses, like a man who knows not what he says.* It was, indeed, good for them *to have been there;* it was well that those three chosen disciples who a few weeks later were to see their Divine Master bowed to the earth in a very agony of sorrow—scourged, and mocked, and crowned with thorns and crucified—it was well that for a few brief moments they should have seen Him in His glory, to the end that the remembrance of the vision might sustain them in their terrible trial. But it was not good for them to be there in perpetuity; it was better for them that the vision should pass, and that, cheered by what they had momentarily seen, they should gird themselves to the tasks that lay before them.

In this life it is our lot, nay rightly understood it is our privilege, to live by faith and not by sight; and it is for our own good that our Lord, instead of being prodigal with His illuminations (as the devil is with his

* St Mark ix. 5.

dissolving views), gives us only just those glimpses of His glory which we need, and for the rest bids us trust ourselves with full confidence to Him.

And with this mention of confidence we may pass to the more particular consideration of the words which were quoted at the outset by way of text, and which it will be useful to repeat, with a portion of their context, here: "And Peter said: Lord it is good for us to be here. . . . And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshaded them, and lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is My beloved Son; hear ye Him. And the disciples, hearing, fell upon their face, and were very much afraid. And Jesus came, and touched them, and said to them: Arise, and fear not. And they, lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus." Again and again, as we turn the pages of the New Testament, we read that on occasion of some striking manifestation of the divine glory or power —whether in the form of a vision of angels or otherwise—the beholders of such manifestations were smitten with fear. So it was with Zachary, the father of St John the Baptist, in the Temple; so it was with the shepherds on the night of our Lord's Nativity, and—not to attempt a complete enumeration of instances—so it was with the Apostles on more than one occasion during the period of the public ministry of Jesus, and after the Resurrection. In each case the re-assuring command is given: *Noli* (or, *Nolite*) *timere*—"Fear not." "Fear not, for thy prayer is heard;"* "Fear not, for I bring you good tidings of great joy;"† such are the words

* St Luke i. 13. † St Luke ii. 10.

of the Angel to Zachary and to the shepherds; and still more comforting, because more simple and self-sufficient, is the assurance given by our Lord Himself, more than once, to His own chosen ones: "It is I, fear ye not." *

And indeed it cannot be doubted that one of the manifold purposes of the Incarnation was to make men—or rather, let us say, to make *good* men, or, better still, to make men who are trying to be good—less afraid of God. And it is in accordance with a whole series of object-lessons set before us in the New Testament, that no small portion of the efforts of those whose duty and privilege it is to have some care of souls, should be directed precisely to the end and purpose of allaying vain fears. It is indeed well for us that, from time to time, by some sudden realisation of the awfulness of the Divine Majesty, we should be made to shrink into ourselves, and, as it were, to shrivel up under a keen sense of our own nothingness and of the nothingness of all created things by comparison with God. But these sudden spasms of fear and awe, though most salutary in themselves and in their effects, are not, and are not intended to be, permanent states of the soul. It was well for the Apostles, on Tabor, that for a few moments they should be cast down with fear and trembling at the sound of the voice out of the cloud. But experiences such as these were not to form a part of the normal web and tissue of their daily lives; it was better for them that the shudder of fear as well as the vision of glory, should pass; it was well for them indeed that "Jesus came, and touched

* St Matt. xiv. 27; St John vi. 20; St Luke xxiv. 36.

them, and said to them: Arise, and fear not." "And they, lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus." "No one, but only Jesus;" and from Him they, His faithful followers, assuredly had nothing to fear.

And we too, so long as we are faithful, or are striving to be faithful, to Him, have nothing to fear from Him. It is true that from all eternity He was, that He is, and ever will be, God in very deed; that He is truly, and perfectly, and without ambiguity of phrase, divine; that He is co-eternal, co-equal, consubstantial with the Father; it is true that if we were to fix our attention too exclusively on His Divinity, we might well feel reason to shudder at the thought of His awful nearness, that all-embracing Presence which we can never escape; but it is no less true that He is also in very deed Man, as you and I are men, born of a human Mother, and advanced to the fulness of perfect manhood by the same stages of growth and development through which you have passed or are passing. And since He became Man, among other reasons, precisely in order that he might put us—so to say—more at our ease with Him, it is His wish that we should think of Him as Man, and deal with Him as Man, and treat Him, and trust Him, as we should treat and trust a human friend.

For, as Man, He is indeed to you—if you will but recognise Him as such—the one Friend beyond compare. So much beyond compare, that if ever you could find an ideal friend among mere men, he would be one who should love you entirely in and for Christ our Lord; who should love you because he loves Him; who should love in you not any external

advantage or superficial quality, but that inward excellence wherein you resemble or may come to resemble Him; and whose one desire on your behalf should be to see you more and more closely united to Him. For He, Christ our Lord, is at once the source and the goal, the alpha and the omega, the starting-point and the meeting-point of the highest, the noblest, the most unselfish acts and manifestations of true and genuine love.

"And Jesus came, and touched them, and said to them: Arise and fear not. And they, lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus." And when they saw "no one, but only Jesus," their fears vanished. O, that it might be so—O that it may be so—with us. "Arise, and fear not." Arise from your slumber of carelessness or of sin, and fear not any effort or any sacrifice which this may cost you, for it is He who asks it of you. Fear not that He will forget to reward you, or that He will suffer you to be at a loss through fidelity to Him. Or rather, think not overmuch of the reward, nor bargain like a haggling pedlar over the price at which you are to be paid for your service, but treat Him as you would treat a well-loved friend whose every wish you would be eager to forestall, instead of waiting to be asked, nay even entreated, and then at last complying with an ill grace.

"Arise! Fear ye not." Be not afraid to do whatsoever you can for Him who never spared Himself in His labours for you. Be not afraid to "do without" things for Him, who for your enriching underwent the very extremity of poverty and privation. Be not afraid to endure pains and trials for Him who

endured the Cross, with all its agony and shame, for you.

"Arise! Fear ye not." At least be not afraid to receive your best Friend in the house of your heart in and through the Sacrament of His love. Behold, day by day, He stands at the door and knocks. Rouse yourself out of that state of vain and delusive apprehension which keeps so many of us from heeding His daily invitation to the Holy Table. Oh! fling away your groundless alarm and come hither where He awaits you. And here at this rail, while you bow down, as it is but fit that you should, in awe and adoration, He will come down from the altar, and will touch you, and say to you: "Arise, fear not." And lifting up the eyes of faith you will see, as the Apostles did, "no one, but only Jesus." And why should you fear Him?

XVII

ECCE HOMO!*

"Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment. And Pilate said to them: Behold the man. . . . And [again] he saith to the Jews: Behold your King"—ST JOHN ix. 5, 14.

IN all ages of the world the whole-hearted allegiance of man to God his Creator has been in its various degrees a matter of precept or of counsel. In every age has God spoken to man through the voice of conscience, a conscience dull and rudimentary, or more delicate and highly developed, according to circumstances, local, social, or individual. And for some at least among the race of mankind a revelation growing in explicitness from the earliest times had come to the aid of conscience in guiding men's steps aright.

But a new and quite distinctive feature was introduced into practical religion by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, God made Man. The Incarnation, the Birth, the Life, the Passion, the Death of Jesus Christ, with His victory over death through His Resurrection and Ascension, these things

* April 1, 1906 (Passion Sunday).

have given to the Christian religion an element of enthusiasm—the enthusiasm of personal loyalty—that was all but lacking, or was present only in an attenuated form, in the religion of the Old Testament. This, as Newman in the concluding sections of his "Grammar of Assent" has so eloquently set forth, was perhaps the most striking feature in primitive Christianity. And this it is that, more than anything else, renders comprehensible the heroism of the martyrs, of the saints, and of millions of their devoted servants of God thoughout the Christian era.

And Pilate said to them: "Behold the Man Behold your King!"

No man, in this mortal state of ours, could behold the majesty of God and live, even supposing that God in His Divine nature could become the direct object of our sense-bound faculties. But of Jesus Christ, God made Man, it could be said, and it was said, and it is said to every one of us: "Behold the Man! Behold your King!" The words were uttered by Pilate half in mockery, as who should say: "Look upon this pitiful object, clad in the rags and tatters of a mock royalty, and crowned with a diadem devised by fiendish cruelty; this wretched creature torn and bruised and buffeted, His features half concealed by an unsightly mask of blood and spittle; look upon this miserable being and see to what a plight that man is reduced about whom there has been such a clamour and an outcry, look upon the man concerning whom you professed to be afraid that he would make himself your King. Behold the Man! Behold, forsooth, your King!" But the mocking words of the Roman governor, like the callous words of the Jewish

High Priest: "It is expedient that one man should die for the people," were full of prophetic import, and expressed a deeper truth than was dreamed of by him who uttered them.

And to us, in the light of after events and of the Christian tradition, it is given to understand them in their truer and deeper meaning. Behold the Man! Aye, behold Him who is the very exemplar and model of mankind, the very flower of humanity! Behold Him who is indeed our King, the most gracious and loving and merciful and faithful Sovereign under whom anyone could ever take service, and in whose service we have in fact enrolled ourselves. Behold the Man, and understand well that in proportion as you become like to Him in utter generosity of self-sacrifice, you will approach to the highest ideal of true manliness. Not in self-indulgence, not in a foolish attempt to assert a futile independence, not in swagger and self-sufficiency and self-conceit, but in courageous endurance, in persevering self-denial, above all in the spirit of self-forgetting self-sacrifice does true Christian manliness consist, as we shall at last learn (if we have not been wise enough to learn it before) when we stand, along with Pilate, to be judged by Him whom Pilate judged.

Behold the Man! And behold your King! It is now, in the midst of His sufferings and humiliations, that His kingship is asserted. And it was by means of these sufferings and humiliations, endured on our behalf, that He would arouse our attention, awaken our interest, plead for our sympathy, demand our loyalty, and claim our love. It is as a warrior king that He stands before us, His garments—as in the

vision of Isaiah—dyed red with blood;* and not till He has shed every drop of it will He claim the fruits of His victory. He has yet to tread the Way of the Cross, and He invites us to follow Him. Not that He asks any one of us to endure torments comparable with His; but He does ask each of us without exception manfully to shoulder his cross, the cross of duty, the cross of voluntary self-denial and penance according to the measure of our strength or weakness; He does ask each one of us to set his feet bravely and firmly upon the narrow path that leads upwards to eternal life, and not upon the broad and open and easy road along which they travel whose goal is the abyss, whose record is without distinction, and their memory without praise, in the eyes of God and on the lips of right-thinking men. Behold your King! What is to be your answer to His appeal, what your response to His call? Will you hesitate? Will you hang back? Will you turn away your eyes and refuse to look upon your Lord? Will you close your ears lest you should hear His voice saying to you: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me?" Or will you rather say: "Yea, Lord, with Thy help I will follow Thee as closely as it shall please Thee to suffer me to do so. Suffer me to work for Thee, grant me a share in Thy labours, nay if it be Thy will even in Thy sufferings, that I may be the nearer to Thee in Thy kingdom, and that I may be the means of drawing others, too, to the knowledge and the love of Thee?"

To some of us, of course, notwithstanding the plain words of the gospel, this will seem a hard—perhaps

* Isa. lxiii. 1 ff.

even an impossible—ideal. Some of us might be inclined to say, if we were seriously to think about the matter, that life on such terms and under such conditions would be intolerably dismal and gloomy. But such a fear and apprehension would be but an illusion of the evil one and of our own unchastened self-love. The same merciful Lord who bids us to take up our cross and follow Him, also assures us that His yoke is sweet and His burden light. And it is those who have the courage to take Him at His word, and resolutely to combat their irregular and inordinate inclinations — it is the courageous and the generous who know best what true happiness is, such happiness as can be enjoyed under the conditions of our mortal state.

And to those of you who are striving earnestly to fit yourselves for His service, whose one ruling desire is to do all that you can for our Lord, whatever the state of life may be to which you are called, to such I would say, make it a point of special endeavour to serve our Lord with interior joy and cheerfulness; rejoicing always as St Paul bids us to do, thanking Him always as the Church in the Preface of the Mass daily bids us to do, and thanking Him most of all when things seem to go amiss with you, when you are—or fancy yourselves to be—neglected or misunderstood, or thwarted or disappointed, or when you have failed to gain some temporal advantage for which you had worked hard and on which you had set your heart. These are the precious moments of your lives, far more precious than hours of the sunshine of prosperity and success, for it is at such moments that our Lord draws you nearer to Himself

by giving you a share—even though it should be a tiny share—of His cross.

Hilarem datorem diligit Deus—"The Lord loveth a cheerful giver," * and the lesson of cheerfulness and joy in the midst of labours and privations, and even of pain, is one which it is almost indispensable that we should learn if we are to persevere in a life of self-sacrifice. For no one will ever, except by fits and starts, do anything great for God unless he is carried along by some kind of enthusiasm. And enthusiasm will not long survive in an atmosphere of depression and discouragement; nor will it be maintained concurrently with a mere passive acquiescence in a humdrum routine of life. If we are to do great things for God, God must first do great things for us; and if the words of our Lady's canticle: "He that is mighty hath done great things for me," are to be verified in our own lives, so also must the opening words of the same canticle: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

Nothing, it might be thought, could be more alien from the whole spirit of the New Testament than any kind of boastfulness; and yet the verb *gloriari*, to boast or "glory," with its derivatives, occurs with quite surprising frequency in the Epistles of St Paul. Not of course that the Apostle glories in any gift or achievement of his own. He knows perfectly well that his own intellectual powers, great as these were, could be of no more account for the kingdom of God than the intellectual powers of his heathen neighbours, except in so far as they were brought into the service

* 2 Cor. ix. 7.

of God, and sanctified by Him. He knew well that whatever he might seem to do for the salvation of souls was really the work of God in and through himself. Paul might plant and Apollos might water, but it was God alone who could give the increase, and bid the harvest to sprout and ripen.* It is, then, not of himself that St Paul is proud, but in his own phrase he "glories in the cross of Christ."† He is proud, not of himself but of our Lord, somewhat as one of us might legitimately be proud of his father or brother, or of a friend more gifted than himself. He is moved to enthusiasm by the thought of so much love, of so much generosity, of so much tender mercy towards the poor, the despised, the afflicted, and of so marvellous a victory over the minds and hearts of men; a victory won by means which, to all human seeming, were so unlikely and so inadequate. What could have been more hopeless, in appearance, than the outlook from the cave of Bethlehem, unless it were the outlook from the Prætorium of Pilate or the hill of Calvary? And yet it was through the lowliness of Bethlehem and Nazareth, and through the deep humiliation and the awful pains of the passion, that our Lord won His victory on our behalf. Of that victory and of the means whereby it was achieved we do well to be proud. In that victory we shall do well to rejoice if, at whatever cost of labour, of penance and self-denial, or of suffering that comes to us without our seeking, we are counted worthy to have a share in it.

And so as we listen to the words of Pilate, "Behold the Man! Behold your King!" let us recognise in

* 1 Cor. iii. 6, 7. † Gal. vi. 14.

Him our true Model and our King indeed, under whose standard be it our joy to march, not among the miscellaneous rabble of camp-followers in the rear, glad to enjoy an inglorious share in the fruits of a victory gained by the exertions of others, but as men whose ambition it is to have our position in the firing-line and to bear the brunt of the battle. This was the ambition of the Martyrs, this the ambition of a true Christian.

XVIII

FAITH, TRUST, AND THANKFULNESS*

"Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed"—ST JOHN xx. 29.†

THE first idea which the word "faith" very properly and naturally suggests to the minds of most of us is that of belief in such revealed truths as, for instance, the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, the Resurrection of our Lord, His real presence in the Holy Eucharist, and so forth. But there is another kind—or rather another aspect—of faith, on which very great stress is laid in Holy Scripture, and to which we may fitly and usefully make a special application of our Lord's words: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed." And that is, faith in the providence of God; faith in His providence, not merely as regards the general government of the world, but in relation to ourselves personally. When our Lord slept upon the poop of Simon Peter's fishing-boat in the midst of the storm, and the disciples in their terror waked

* April 7, 1907 (Low Sunday).
† From the Gospel of the day.

Him with cries for help, He remonstrated with them saying: "Why are ye afraid, O ye of little faith?"* And when, on a later occasion, St Peter himself had been bidden by our Lord to come to Him upon the waters, and then began to be alarmed at the very trial of his confidence which he had himself challenged, our Lord's words to Him were: "O thou of little faith, why didst thou doubt?"† And the same phrase occurs in two other passages of St Matthew's Gospel,‡ in connection with faint-hearted misgivings concerning God's care of His own.

"To them that love God," says St Paul to the Romans, "all things work together for good."§ And he thereby instructs us that, of those things which happen to us independently of the control of our will, nothing can really hurt us unless we allow it to do so; that every such incident or event, whether pleasant or unpleasant, is capable of being turned to good account for our eternal salvation; that there is no stumbling-block in our path that cannot be converted into a stepping-stone towards heaven. And lest we should for a moment imagine that God's care of us is exercised only in what we account the more important affairs of life, our Lord quite plainly and explicitly assures us that this is not so. When Hamlet says, in the play: "There is a providence in the fall of a sparrow," he is but alluding to a well-known passage in the Sermon on the Mount, in which our Lord exhorts us to a boundless confidence in the goodness and mercy of our Heavenly Father, and warns us against the supposition that even what we regard as

* St Matt. xiii. 26.
† St Matt. xiv. 31.
‡ St Matt. vi. 30; xvi. 8.
§ Rom. viii. 28.

the most trifling occurrences are too small for His all-seeing eye, or lie outside the scope of His all-contriving providence.

Now it is worthy of note that one of the very best means that we have at our disposal for keeping alive and fostering in our souls this trustful faith in God's providence, is the habit of frequently and very earnestly thanking God for His mercies and benefits. It is a habit which we shall all of us be the better for cultivating more assiduously. For we are all of us more or less prone, after the manner of spoiled children, to take God's favours for granted; or, at the best, we too easily content ourselves with general expressions of a somewhat conventional gratitude. Whereas, if we would make a point of explicitly thanking God for each particular favour as it occurs, we should before long begin to perceive that we have very much more to be thankful for than we had supposed; and, what is more to our present purpose, our faith and confidence in His goodness and His watchfulness over us would be gradually deepened and strengthened; so that when troubles, small or great, arise, we should meet them without fear, and with a readiness to recognise in them real blessings in disguise. For indeed there can be no question that trials, bravely borne for God's sake, are immeasurably greater blessings than those gleams of the sunshine of prosperity which in our childhood, or in our spiritual childhood, may have seemed to us the only things that could afford an occasion for thankfulness.

"Blessed are they that have not seen, but have believed." It may be useful to bring the thoughts

which we have connected with these words into a more clear and explicit relation with the idea of thankfulness, and in particular of thankfulness in time of tribulation. In the second chapter of the Book of Tobias, after recounting that—by an accident, as we should call it—the elder Tobias had been smitten with blindness, the sacred writer goes on:—

"Now this trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might be given to posterity of his patience. . . . For whereas he had always feared God from his infancy, and kept His commandments, he repined not against God because the evil of blindness had befallen him, but continued immovable in the fear of God, *giving thanks to God all the days of his life.* [And] . . . his relatives and kinsmen mocked at him, saying: Where is thy hope, for which thou gavest alms, and didst bury the dead? But Tobias rebuked them, saying: Speak not so, for we are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to them that never change their faith from Him." *

Here is an example, an heroic example, of one who in a very literal sense "saw not, yet believed"; and who showed his unshaken faith in God's providence by persevering thankfulness under a great and terrible affliction. And we too, in the course of our lives, shall have many opportunities of showing that, in the midst of troubles, we "look for that life which God will give to them that never change their faith from Him." We shall none of us be entirely free from troubles and crosses throughout our lives; and it would be a great misfortune for us if we were.

* Job ii. 12-18.

For it is troubles and crosses that try our faith, and by trying it give us priceless opportunities of exercising it, in circumstances under which its exercise is most pleasing to God.

We have been told, and very truly told, that the devil, like a skilful angler, makes it his practice to fish in troubled waters.* And this, most assuredly, is a reason why we should strive to preserve in our souls, as far as we possibly can, the clear weather of cheerfulness and joy. But it will happen to all of us from time to time that the waters are troubled, and the weather overcast; and this may occur, either through no fault of our own, or from some sin or fault or imprudence of which we have been guilty, or more often from a combination of causes which we cannot analyse. Our depression may arise partly from ill-health, partly from some lack of success in our work, or from some misunderstanding with companions or friends, or again of anxiety of mind, of scruples, of a feeling, well or ill grounded, that we are not as thoroughly at peace with God as we once were. No matter what the cause may be, the remedy lies, first and foremost, in reviving and maintaining our trust in God.

We have more than once set before ourselves, as a comprehensive programme of life, "unbounded generosity and unbounded confidence." Now there are times when the point that most needs to be insisted on is generosity. These are the times when we are well and strong and prosperous, and generally speaking "in good form," as the phrase goes. But

* The allusion is to a sermon preached on Easter Sunday in the Church of St Peter, Stonyhurst.

when we are out of sorts, disappointed, disheartened, downcast, then is the time when confidence is in some respects of even greater importance than generosity, when, indeed, we can best show our generosity by diligently exercising ourselves in confidence, and when further generosity is sure to follow so soon as our confidence has been, by God's grace and our own efforts, more fully restored.

I mentioned just now that particular form of mental distress which arises from a feeling that we do not stand as well with our Lord as we once did, that we have not the same consolation in prayer which we formerly enjoyed, and so forth. This is a kind of trial which only those who are thoroughly in earnest can even begin to understand, but for those who are in earnest it is a very real one. It is a trial that deserves the most reverent and gentle treatment, such treatment as that which our Lord Himself, out of the tenderness of His Sacred Heart, applied to the sorrowing Magdalene when on finding the tomb empty she grieved that they had taken away her Lord, and knew not where they had laid Him;* or to the disciples on their way to Emmaus, who thought that they had lost him forever, that they would never see Him again, and that all their hopes were finally shattered.† The trial of which I speak, though to each individual it comes as a new and strange experience, causing him to feel as though something were amiss with his spiritual life, is in fact of quite usual occurrence. It happens more often than not that when a man, or a boy, first turns his heart with greater fervour towards God, when, for instance, he

* St John xx. 2. † St Luke xxiv. 21.

first begins to practise daily or more frequent Communion, and more sedulously to keep himself from deliberate sin, he enjoys, for a while, a peace which he imagines, perhaps, that nothing can destroy. But it is not in the ordinary course of God's providence that this state of undisturbed tranquillity should be permanent. The time is sure to come, sooner or later, when he finds that prayer involves a far greater effort than it seemed to require a few weeks or months ago; and then the danger is lest he should lose heart; lest he should put it all down to his own fault; lest he should give up his daily Communions or other pious practices; lest he should settle down once more to that comfortable sort of unambitious and easy-going Christianity towards which we are all so apt to gravitate. Whereas he should remember that in all probability the change that has come over him is in the main a change of *feeling* rather than of will; that it is the will and not the feelings by which we are judged; and that the prayers and pious practices in which we persevere in spite of difficulties are far more meritorious in God's sight than those which are rendered sweet and easy by divine consolations. When St Catharine of Siena had on one occasion been terribly disturbed and upset (as we should say) by a protracted storm of temptation and desolation, she asked: "Where wert Thou, Lord, when my soul was so perturbed?" And the answer was that He had been with her, and most intimately united with her, throughout her time of trial.

No matter then, as was said just now, what the cause or nature of our trial may be; no matter from

what quarter the clouds may have come; no matter what the source and origin of the troubling of the waters in our soul; we may always and invariably find, if we will, a remedy in confidence, and best of all in that highest form of confidence which is shown in persevering thankfulness. For it is by persevering thankfulness that we best show our unshaken trust in God, and our conviction that, whether we ourselves have been at fault or no, He at least has never for one moment relaxed His watchful care over us; that He at least has never ceased to desire to draw us to a closer union with Him; and therefore that He has never for one moment ceased to deserve our thanks.

And in conclusion let us bear in mind that the Holy Eucharist, as its name denotes, is pre-eminently the Sacrament of thankfulness; and therefore that perseverance, under due conditions, in daily or frequent Communion affords us an admirable means of protesting our confidence in our Lord. And we shall do well in our thanksgiving after Holy Communion to express our gratitude, not only for those visible and palpable favours which we cannot fail to recognise if we turn our attention to them, but also for any crosses and trials that may have fallen to our lot, and for those innumerable graces which our Lord is ever bestowing upon us without our being aware of them. Thus shall we deserve that blessing which He pronounced on "those who have not seen, but believed."

XIX

MERCY FOR THE MERCIFUL*

"In this we have known the charity of God, that He hath laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren"—1 JOHN iii. 16.

THERE are two passages in the Gospels which set our Lord before us in the character of the Good Shepherd. One of them, which is common to the Gospels of St Matthew and St Luke,† is the parable of the lost sheep, of which the shepherd goes in search until he finds it and brings it home upon his shoulders, rejoicing over its recovery. This is a similitude which has appealed to the hearts of the faithful throughout the Christian ages. Among the paintings of which so many have survived to this day in the underground chapels or chambers of the Roman catacombs, the representation of our Lord as thus saving the sheep that had strayed almost invariably occupies the central place in every group or series of frescoes, and is of far more frequent occurrence than any other subject; doubtless as being better fitted than any other to remind the beholder of the tender mercy of our Divine Saviour.

* April 14, 1907 (Second Sunday after Easter).

† St Matt. xviii. 12-14; St Luke xv. 5-7.

The second passage occurs in the tenth chapter of St John's Gospel, and is read in the Mass of this, the second Sunday after Easter, which is hence known as Good Shepherd Sunday. In it our Lord reminds us that His mercy is not merely tender, but supremely generous and self-sacrificing; that He has not merely made a weary search for His lost sheep, but has laid down His life for the salvation of His flock.

From both passages we learn once again that lesson which we all so urgently need, even though we are sometimes too proud and self-sufficient to recognise our need of it, the lesson of boundless confidence in our Lord's mercy. It is a lesson which, as has been said, we need most especially at those times when all is not well with us. It matters not what is amiss; whether our trouble be sin, which deservedly heads the list of evils, or temptations which expose us to the danger of sin, or temporal misfortune, or mental distress at some unkindness that has been shown us, or depression of spirits, or ill-health, or the uneasy sense of demoralisation which ill-health so often brings with it, and which is so often the outcome of our own selfishness under trials; the mere fact that we are not as we should wish to be gives us a special title to His tender compassion, which, even though we should shut our eyes to it, is never wanting to us in the hour of our need.

Moreover, our hope and confidence should not be limited solely to the boon of eternal salvation, which we trust that we shall not miss, but should extend itself to the earnest desire to find ourselves entirely at peace in the loving arms of Him whose own desire is that the weary or wounded of His flock should find

their rest and their solace as near as possible to His Sacred Heart. He came, as He himself tells us in the same chapter of St John's Gospel, not only that we may "have life," the supernatural life of the soul which is His grace, but that we may "have it more abundantly."* It is the narrowness of our own hearts, not any stint of the divine gift, which hinders us from the fulness of life-giving union with Him.

Since, however, we have already had occasion to dwell at some length on this topic of unshaken confidence in our Lord, we may profitably turn our attention this morning to another lesson which is to be drawn from the Gospel of the Good Shepherd, a lesson which has in each succeeding century impressed itself if possible more and more deeply on the Christian conscience. In the similitude with which we are concerned, our Lord sets forth the tenderness and the self-sacrificing generosity of His mercy towards us, not merely as something which we should admire; not merely as something for which we should be deeply thankful; not merely as something which should fill us with confidence; but also as affording us an example which we should strive to imitate. He in fact sets Himself before us as a model of unselfish charity. As He is merciful, as His Heavenly Father is merciful, so He would have us to be merciful; and, indeed, the measure of His mercy to us will be, as He himself tells us elsewhere, the mercy which we show to others.

And when we think of mercy, it is desirable to understand the term in the widest possible sense, as including all manner of kindness to others, as includ-

* St John x. 10.

ing all manner of thoughtfulness and consideration for others, as including, in a word, all that we understand by "unselfishness." In order to practise mercy in this widest sense, we need not wait till our compassion is moved by the sight of some one in a state of abject misery. There is plenty of room for kindness, for thoughtfulness and consideration for others, for unselfishness, in our daily dealings with those among whom we live. And, leaving out of account, for the moment, the highest motives for the exercise of these qualities, we shall find that in the long run, even in this present life, their exercise will be the means of increasing our own happiness. For, instead of concentrating all our attention upon our own narrow and personal interests, we shall learn cordially to rejoice at the well-being of others, and to find our pleasure not merely in pleasing ourselves, but also in pleasing them.

This is the great secret of happiness in family life, when it is lived as it ought to be lived. The Christian home is, or should be, a great school of unselfishness. It was at home that we learned, perhaps almost unconsciously, our first lessons in this most desirable of dispositions; and it is in relation to the members of our own family and household that most of us will have, through life, some of our best opportunities of exercising it. It was at home that we first learned, probably without being aware that we were learning, to be solicitous for the good of others, for the health and the welfare of father and mother, brothers and sisters. And as we grow older, and come to a fuller knowledge of the cares and anxieties of life, we shall have abundant opportunities of show-

ing something more than mere sympathy with the various members of the home circle in their trials and troubles. Sympathy is indeed by no means to be despised, for sympathy carries encouragement with it. It is valuable, and it is highly valued; valuable *because* it is valued. But as time goes on, we shall find it more and more possible to be helpful at home, as well as sympathetic. And it is not too soon to begin.

The subject is appropriate on the eve of our Easter holiday. When we go home we shall find that we are made much of, that our elders take a good deal of pains to make things pleasant for us. And the danger is that under such treatment we should think altogether too much of ourselves and too little of others. And, strange as it may seem to say so, that is not the way to spend the happiest kind of holiday. If you want the very best kind of holiday that is within your reach, think a little, not merely of all the nice things that father and mother and others of the household are going to do to make things pleasant for *you*, but also how you can help to make things pleasant for *them*. And this will be as good a preparation as you can possibly make for the wider charities of later life. Charity, as we have so often had occasion to remind ourselves, begins at home. And if it does not begin at home, it certainly will not flourish away from home.

Take the very simplest case of a good Christian household, one which even in the humblest circumstances may be supremely happy, a household that consists of two persons only, an only son, for instance, and his widowed mother. The mother is entirely

devoted to her son, and he is no less devoted to her, not only helping to support her by the labour of his hands or his brain, but always on the lookout for opportunities of doing little things that will give her pleasure, while she, on her part, has no other end in life, humanly speaking, but to make her son happy. How different is the result for both from what it would be if each had been intent only on following his or her individual likings and tastes. And when this ideal combination of mutual respect and kindness is not confined to two persons only, but is extended in its degree to all the members of a more numerous family, the blessing is multiplied and enhanced in proportion. It is not too much to say—and indeed it has often been said by those who are most deeply versed in the inner history of human society, and who have the keenest insight into the conditions of genuine prosperity—that such homes are the very seed-plots of the true greatness of a nation. For there can be no true and lasting national greatness where there is not a widespread spirit of self-sacrifice. And the home, as I have said, is the first school, the school established by God Himself, in which the lesson of self-sacrifice must be learned.

Of course we all understand that the ways and manners of "grown-ups" are occasionally rather trying to boys, who are apt to find them "slow" and uninteresting. But after all we are not expected to spend the whole day with our elders, an arrangement which might be as unpleasant for them as for us. When, however, they show a desire for our company, or might reasonably expect it of us, then

we have the opportunity of practising a little self-denial, a kind of self-denial which is all the more valuable because it is in the cause of charity. The little sacrifices of our own convenience which we make on behalf of our elders are, after all, but a tiny fraction of what they have done for us; the minutes we devote to them are probably not as many by far as the hours during which they have worked for us.

Moreover we must remember that if our unselfishness depended entirely on our having nice people to deal with, then it would not be worth much. We have to school ourselves to behave nicely (whether at home or elsewhere) to people who are not always or altogether to our taste, and to put up with their little foibles, or what we suppose to be such; just as they have so often had to put up in the past with our restlessness and waywardness, with our indifference and stinginess, with our selfish unwillingness to oblige.

But why, you may ask, should we do this? Why should we try to make ourselves pleasant even to people who are not specially agreeable to us? And here the appeal must be made to those higher motives which were passed over just now. One of the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, one of those principles from which there is no escaping, is that we are to look for our reward, not principally on the spot, or from our fellow-creatures, but in the future, and from our Father who is in heaven; and that even when gratitude or other amiable qualities are wanting, or may seem to be wanting, we are to go on showing kindness and doing acts of charity for our Lord's sake, with the

certainty that we shall not lack our reward from Him. "Be ye merciful," says our Lord, in St Luke's "Gospel of Mercy," "Be ye merciful as your Father is merciful. . . . Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure wherewith you shall measure, it shall be measured to you again."* And this, it need hardly be said, holds good, not merely of alms and material gifts, but quite as fully and as truly of kind words, and kind and thoughtful actions, towards those especially who do not make us an immediate return such as we might think that we have a right to expect. Our reward is safe in our Lord's hands.

But indeed, if we would be a little more courageous in this matter of mercy and kindness, we should very soon find that people whom we had judged to be thoroughly disagreeable are, after all, what boys call "ever so decent," so long as we treat them "decently," instead of being rude and discourteous to them. And although we are warned not to look for our reward on the spot, or in this life, it will often happen that we shall find it here even without looking for it.

To conclude. In the first of the Rules of our Sodality we are reminded that we honour our Lady, not only by singing her praises and invoking her intercession, but also—and most especially— by imitating her virtues; since the practice of these virtues will as is plain, do far more than anything else to render us pleasing to her Son. And in the same

* St Luke vi. 36, 38.

way we shall best honour our Lord as the Good Shepherd, not merely by our confidence in His mercy, but also and most especially by learning from Him to show mercy—in the widest sense of the term—to others. "In this have we known the charity of God, that He," our Good Shepherd, "hath laid down His life for us; and we ought" to be ready, if need were, "to lay down our lives for the brethren." And if to lay down our lives for them, much more to do them such little services of thoughtful kindness, even at some slight cost to ourselves, as may lie within our power.

XX

PRAYER MADE EASY: SIMPLICITY AND CONFIDENCE*

"Lord, teach us to pray"—ST LUKE xi. 1.

PRAYER, and in particular "prayer made easy," is a subject which we may profitably consider this morning. The general topic, viz., prayer, is suggested by the Gospel appointed for this present Sunday, and also by the Gospel which is read in the ferial Mass of the next three days—the "Rogation Days" as they are called. And there is this special reason for dwelling on the topic of "prayer made easy," that unquestionably much avoidable slackness in spiritual matters arises from a mistaken estimate of the difficulty of prayer.

We are all familiar with the parable of the good seed choked by the thorns, a parable which plainly has a special application to the years of boyhood and of youth. Any one who has had experience in such matters will tell you how often it happens that a boy starts well, giving good promise of great generosity in God's service, and yet that, as he grows up to manhood, the promise is belied, and he gradually sinks to a level

* May 5, 1907 (Fifth Sunday after Easter).

of very unheroic conventional respectability. And why? For the simple reason that, as he grows older, his higher aspirations are choked by the competing pressure of other interests, by "the cares and the pleasures of life," as our Lord puts it; and that under stress of this competing pressure his heart becomes less resolutely set upon the one chief purpose of pleasing and serving God. And if the danger of such a falling-off occasionally makes itself felt, or creeps upon us unperceived, even while we are at school, much more is it to be feared during the years which will immediately follow our leaving school. For then the external helps at our disposal will be fewer, and our temptations may not improbably be very much greater, than at present.

Now there can be no doubt that this kind of falling-off is sometimes to be ascribed, as has been said, partly at least to a mistaken notion as to the difficulty of prayer, and as to the conditions which must be fulfilled in order to pray profitably and with fervour. And therefore it is of the utmost importance to remember that the excellence of our prayers does not depend on the length of time that we can spend on our knees, or even, primarily, on the degree in which we can keep ourselves free from distractions. For as the years go on it will probably become physically or morally impossible for us to devote as much time to prayer as we have been accustomed to give to it. And moreover, as a boy grows to manhood, his mind naturally becomes more alert and active, his interests and occupations become more varied, and some of them more absorbing; he has to prepare for a difficult examination, on which, perhaps, his whole career

depends; or he finds his business or his profession, in its earlier stages, irksome and laborious; he is more liable to suffer from fatigue and overwork than when he was younger, and consequently he needs a greater variety of amusements and recreations; and it may well be that through no fault of his own, but simply as the result of his circumstances, he finds himself far more worried with distractions than when he had nothing but the duty in hand to occupy his thoughts. It would be untrue to say that this is always so, but it may be so; and the reflection that it may be so with us should help us to resist and vanquish that feeling of uneasiness in prayer, and of distaste for prayer, which so often leads to a fatal discouragement. And discouragement deserves to be called fatal, because under its influence we are so apt to acquiesce in our failure, or our supposed failure, to pray well, and thus gradually to degenerate into a really culpable slackness.

Now of all the preventives against this culpable slackness in prayer, of all the means whereby prayer may be made easy, there are none better than *simplicity* and *confidence.* Let us take simplicity first. A great many of our difficulties in prayer would disappear, or would be more quickly overcome, if only we could bear in mind that the very simplest prayers are often the best of all, as well as the easiest. "My God I believe in Thee, I hope in Thee, I love Thee"—words which were constantly on the lips of our late Father Rector during his last illness *— which of us will ever be too busy to make

* Father Pedro Carlos Gordon, S.J., died April 28, 1907. R.I.P.

from time to time during the day these simple acts of faith, hope, and charity? Or shall we ever be so preoccupied as to be unable to keep our thoughts together while we make one of the brief petitions of the "Our Father," petitions which in the very best and fullest sense we can make in our Lord's name, since it is He who has bidden us to make them? Or again: "My Lord I do this for Thee;" or: "Teach me, O Lord, and give me strength, to do Thy holy will;" or the words of the Psalmist: "In thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me not be confounded forever," * or those of the *Gloria in excelsis:* "We praise Thee, we bless Thee, we adore Thee, we glorify Thee, we give Thee thanks;" or that other prayer which we can never say too often: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death;" or that most cheerful of religious utterances: *Deo gratias*—"Thanks be to God;" or even the one single all-holy name of Jesus, used as an invocation; these are but a few specimens of short and simple ejaculations or aspirations, as they are called, which can be either uttered with the lips or formed in the secrecy of our hearts, in the smallest fraction of a minute, and in the midst of any lawful occupation whatsoever, whether work or play, and more especially during the intervals between one occupation and another. And on the other hand these very same aspirations or ejaculations, repeated again and again, with the simplest and easiest reflections on their meaning, may occupy us, when we have time and opportunity, for many minutes together. The prayer of the publican in the temple,

* Ps. xxx. 2.

so highly commended by our Lord, consisted, as we are told, of nothing more than the reiterated repetition of the humble avowal of his sinfulness, with a cry for mercy: "O Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."* What could be simpler or easier than this?

O acquire the habit while you are young, cultivate the habit while you are yet here, under circumstances the most favourable for the purpose—acquire and cultivate the habit of using and making the most of these simple petitions or outpourings of the heart. Use them momentarily when you have but a moment to spare, not only at fixed and stated times, or in the church or chapel, but at all times and anywhere, whether in the house or out of it; and when you have a few minutes available before public prayers begin, or after they are ended, or during your thanksgiving after Holy Communion, or for a brief space on a Saturday evening, make these same simple petitions or outpourings of the heart the basis of that sort of rudimentary meditation or mental prayer which, as being the simplest and the easiest, is most suitable to your age and condition. And yet not to your age and condition alone; for I venture to say that, the longer you live, the more glad you will be to fall back upon these simple and easy prayers of your boyhood.

No great mental effort, no overtaxing of the brain, no exhausting struggle against distractions, is here required. As a venerable priest, who has long since gone to his reward, used to say: "It is *intention*, rather than *attention*, to which God looks;" the

* St Luke xviii. 13.

intention of the will far more than the attention of the mind. And here we may pass, by an easy transition, from the topic of simplicity to that of confidence. That intention of the will which has just been mentioned is or should be a resolute determination, in spite of all obstacles or seeming obstacles, to keep on easy and familiar terms with our Lord; to treat Him as a Friend in whom we have the most absolute trust; a Friend who knows our difficulties and our weaknesses, and the conditions of our life, far better than we know them ourselves; a Friend to whom we can talk without a shadow of shyness or reserve; a Friend who will never weary of our company, or be tired of our repeated petitions or acts of love and gratitude; a Friend who will never turn from us, because with Him there is no possibility of a misunderstanding, since He alone of all our friends can read and hear and interpret the language of the heart, however clumsy and inadequate our words may be to express our meaning; a Friend, too, who knows well that there are times when we are too jaded and wearied to talk, even to Him—times when we must be content just to rest in His protecting and all-embracing presence, like the nestling under its mother's wing, or the stricken lamb in the arms of the shepherd.

At the same time we must not be in too great a hurry to take refuge in this "prayer of quiet." It would be silly and unmanly to imagine ourselves quite tired out just as we are starting on a fresh stage of our journey. It is, of course, useful to look forward to times of trial, so that when they come they may not take us by surprise. "These things

I have told you," said our Lord to His Apostles at the Last Supper, "that when the hour shall come you may remember that I told you of them." * But it is not good for our spiritual respiration to bend our backs under the phantom weight of an imaginary burden. That would be as though a man should stoop in his walk in order to pass under a low-browed archway that is still two or three miles ahead of him. And while we are still comparatively fresh and "fit," it is well to remind ourselves that confidence is no merely passive or negative disposition; and that on its positive side it goes far beyond a vague sort of trust that with the help of God's grace we shall somehow save our souls in the end. Perfect confidence implies a deep and unshaken conviction that our Lord will not cease, by reason of any legitimate occupations, however harassing or distracting, or for any reason whatsoever but our own foolish fault, to draw us—not suddenly but gently and gradually—to an ever closer union with Himself, according to the measure of our capacities. Perfect confidence implies the belief that the difficulties in prayer which sometimes arise from the exacting nature of our duties, or from the recreations which are necessary, or may hereafter become necessary, to fit us for our duties, are the very means by which, if only we make the right use of them, we may come to that closer union with Him.

Diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum, says St Paul: "To them that love God all things work together for good." † We have already had occasion to remind ourselves of these comforting and bracing words of the Apostle, wherein may be

* St John xvi. 4. † Rom. viii. 28.

found the fundamental charter of our confidence. But they will bear further consideration. "All things work together for good." What does he mean by "all things"? First and foremost everything, whether pleasant or unpleasant, that happens to us without our consent or against our will. Even those temptations, or those temporal misfortunes, which are often the result of past sin, even these may be turned to good account, provided that the sin itself has been repented of. For instance, many a man has ruined his health by gluttony or intemperance or by worse forms of vice, or has marred his own fortunes by dishonesty or untruthfulness or mere laziness. Yet even the pains and hardships thence arising may serve as occasions of merit, provided only that he has discarded, by a sincere act of contrition, the sin which was their cause. And if this is true, then *à fortiori* the same is true of those crosses which fall to our lot without any fault of our own, or which we sometimes bring upon ourselves by that kind of imprudence which is so often the outcome of an ill-directed zeal in God's service. And again the same is true of those duties which, because they deprive us, or may hereafter deprive us, of time or opportunity for prayer, might seem at first sight to be obstacles in the way of our spiritual progress. They are obstacles only in the sense in which the hurdles in a hurdle-race are obstacles in the way of the runners. They would indeed be very serious obstacles if you were to put your head down and collide with them; but rightly taken they are the very conditions for winning the prize. *Diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum*—"To them that love God all things

work together for good." A firm conviction of this truth is one of the most powerful helps we can have in the whole business of prayer.

And consider yet another way in which confidence helps to make prayer easy. Believe, each one of you, that God has a work for you, individually, to do, a work which is your work and which no one else in all the world can do, and which will remain undone unless *you* do it. Believe that the work which God has set you, which God asks of you and expects of you, is the very best that you can undertake, and that it is a great work in God's eyes, however obscure it may perchance be in the judgment of men. Believe that during every day and every waking hour of your lives here at school you are preparing for this work, preparing either well or badly, either qualifying or disqualifying yourselves for its performance. Believe that, for the carrying out of God's work as God would have it done, you need God's help, and that God's help is to be had in abundance for the asking. All this is implied in the one word "confidence." Believe all this, and you will find prayer ever so much easier than if you had no ambition, no active and living trust in God's help and protection, nothing in a word to pray for, except, perhaps, an occasional fine day for your sports or games.

And in this connection let me quote some words from one of Newman's sermons which are well calculated to hearten and inspirit us.

"Every great change," he says, "is effected by the few, not by the many. Much may be *undone* by the many, but nothing [really great] is *done* except by those who are specially trained for action. One or

two men of small outward pretensions, but with their hearts in their work, these do great things."

Now you to whom I am speaking, boys of Stonyhurst College, are of the few; few, that is, in comparison with the whole Catholic population of the country. As you grow older you will see more and more clearly that here you have had advantages, opportunities, helps, which thousands of others, many, perhaps, among your own near neighbours and acquaintances, have lacked. You may misuse these advantages, you may scorn these helps, you may miss or waste these opportunities. But they lie ready to your hand; and they are sufficient, if well used, to make you—in common with the alumni of other great Catholic schools—picked men, men, as Newman says, "specially trained for action," for action in God's service, whether as laymen or as priests. Believe that you are made for great things, believe that you are capable of great things, believe that God will help you to do great things for Him; and your prayers, instinct with courage and confidence, will call forth the full strength of your will, without overtaxing or burdening the mind, however much you may be wearied or preoccupied hereafter with a variety of cares and solicitudes. O Lord, teach us to pray. Teach us to find in prayer, not an irksome task, but our truest solace and support.

XXI

THE ASCENSION *

"And it came to pass that, while He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven. And they . . . returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God."—ST LUKE xxiv. 51-53.

IT must often have struck us as at first sight a strange thing that the Apostles, after our Lord's Ascension, should have returned to Jerusalem "with great joy." Might we not rather have expected them to be overcome with grief at the departure of their beloved Lord and Master, of their Friend so "faithful and true"? † On reflection, however, we see clearly enough that the explanation of their joy is to be sought and found in the unselfishness of their love. The love which can bear separation, and which, notwithstanding the pain of it, can even rejoice in separation when it is for the good of the person who is loved—this kind of affection is assuredly more generous and unselfish than that which requires and demands the comfort of constant intercourse. Such was the love which the Apostles had for their Divine Master. His departure must indeed have caused

* May 9, 1907 (Ascension Day). Preached in St Peter's Church, Stonyhurst.

† *Cf.* Apoc. xix. 11.

them a bitter pang; yet their grief for their own loss was swallowed up in their joy at His exaltation. And so, having been bidden to return to Jerusalem, to await in retirement the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they spent the days of their retreat—if we may so call it—not in weeping and mourning, but in "praising and blessing God."

But more than this. It was in the very act of blessing them that our Lord was removed from their sight. And indeed, if we look a little more closely into the matter, we shall at least begin to perceive that the Ascension was not merely a step in the glorification of the sacred humanity of Jesus, but also, no less truly, a blessing for his Apostles and disciples. We have his own word that it was so. He had said to His faithful followers, on so solemn an occasion as that of His Last Supper: "It is expedient for you that I go."* But why was it expedient for them that He should go? Because, among other reasons, so long as He stayed, in His visible and tangible human presence, here on earth, they would have wished to be with Him; and so long as they could enjoy His company here, it was all but impossible for them to raise their hopes to heaven. We have just heard, in the Epistle of the day, the question which they asked Him less than an hour, as it would seem, before His final departure: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"† After those years of intimate converse with Him, after repeatedly hearing from His lips that they were *not* to look for glory and splendour and rule and domination on earth, but to wait for a better sort of kingdom in the next world, is it not some-

* St John xvi. 7. † Acts i. 6.

thing of a disappointment to find them still entertaining such an expectation as their question implies? Might we not have supposed that at least after the passion and death of our Lord they would have been weaned from such thoughts as these? But no; while One so worthy, as Man, to be King of men still walked the earth, their minds could not but revert—in spite of all that He had said—to the idea of a temporal and earthly kingdom. But when the clouds had received Him out of their sight, when the truth had come home to them that they must wait for the releasing hand of death before they could hope to see Him again, then it became easy for them, in St Paul's words, to "mind the things that are above," to "seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."*

And even so with ourselves. The memory of those whom we have loved, and who have been parted from us, yet not forever, by death, should help us, too, to "mind the things that are above" and to "seek the things that are above." But most of all the thought of Him whose Ascension has opened heaven to them and to us. Day by day, in Holy Mass, the Church addresses to us those words which are at once an admonition and an invitation: *Sursum corda*—"Lift up your hearts." But it were to little purpose to bid us lift up our hearts unless we had our Lord to lift them up to. It is because He has gone before us; it is because He has gone to prepare a place for us; it is because His Sacred Heart, the Heart of our dearest and best Friend, yearns with an inexpressible longing to have us with Him there; for this reason it

* Col. iii. 2.

is that it should be comparatively easy for us Christians to fix our hearts on heaven; for this reason it is that we are bidden to say, in the words of the liturgical response: *Habemus ad Dominum*—"We have them lifted up unto the Lord."

Comparatively easy, and yet not too easy, even for us. For there are many counter-attractions here below that are ever drawing us away from Him; many absorbing cares and distracting interests that are ever putting us in the danger of forgetting Him; many objects—creatures of His own—that are ever thrusting themselves forward to usurp His place in our hearts; many influences at work that tend to sap, if we would let them, our loyalty to Him; and in proportion as our love for Him grows slack and cold, the edge of our desire for heaven is blunted. For hope, as a rule, keeps pace with faith and love.

Yet, on the other hand, it is not by idly "gazing up into heaven" that we shall keep our desire alive. Of that kind of gazing we should soon tire; and, what is more important, it is not His will for us, and our love for Him must be shown by doing His will, and not otherwise. What His will for us really is we may gather, by inference and analogy, from the words which He spoke to the Apostles just before His Ascension: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth."* To bear witness to Him, wherever our lot in life may be cast, whether in the obscurity of a country village or in some crowded centre of popula-

* Acts i. 8.

tion, whether here at home, or in distant lands "even to the uttermost parts of the earth"; to bear witness to Him by our example, our influence, the whole course and tenor of our conduct and conversation; to bear witness to Him by showing in our lives that we are indeed the disciples of a crucified Lord; this assuredly is a worthy object of ambition, a noble aim in life; and this, if only we will not reject it, is the destiny assigned to each one of us. In our own day, no less than in the days of the Apostles, our Lord has need of men who will bear such witness to Him, in every profession and occupation, and in every quarter of the globe.

But in order that we may fulfil this high destiny, we too, like the Apostles, must be, each in his own measure, "endued with power from on high"; * and this power from on high we can secure for ourselves only by the same means whereby they were bidden to dispose themselves for it, namely, by prayer, by constant and persevering prayer. Nor is there any kind of prayer more easy in itself, or more acceptable to our Lord, than that in which the Apostles were engaged during those ten days between the Ascension and Pentecost, when "they were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God." For us the whole world is God's temple, and there is no corner of it from which we may not lift up our hearts to praise and bless and glorify Him, and above all tc give Him thanks for His great mercies. What prayer can be shorter, simpler, more cheerful more pleasing to Him, or more profitable to ourselves, than just: *Deo gratias*—"Thanks be to

* St Luke xxiv. 49.

God"? O thank God, thank God, thank God, every day, and, as far as may be, every hour of your waking lives. Thank Him in sunshine and in storm; thank Him in joy, but also in sorrow; force yourselves to thank Him in your hours of depression and discouragement no less than when you are fresh and fit and in the best of spirits; thank Him in sickness no less than in health, like Tobias in the Old Testament, who, as we may remember, when smitten with blindness, "did not repine, . . . but persevered . . . giving thanks to God all the days of his life." *

The more constantly you will persevere in thanking God, the more clearly you will come to see how much you have to be thankful for. The more earnestly you thank God for His mercies and blessings in the past, the more firmly you will be grounded in confidence as regards the present and the future; so that you will be able to say from your hearts, in the words of a hymn which should be familiar to us all:

> So long thy power hath blessed me, sure it still
> Will lead me on.

If we do but keep our unshaken confidence in Him, He will indeed lead us on to the ever deepening happiness of an ever closer union with Him, withdrawn though He be from our sight. And as thankfulness begets confidence, so confidence in its turn will beget and foster generosity, that unbounded generosity in the service of our Lord whereby we shall best render to Him the testimony which He asks of us, and shall best fit ourselves to share the triumph of His glorious Ascension.

* Tobias ii. 13, 14.

XXII

PRAYER MADE EASY: HUMILITY *

Oratio humiliantis se nubes penetrabit—"The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds."—ECCLUS. xxxv. 21.

IN the Epistle of to-day's Mass, St Peter warns us to "be prudent and watch in prayers." † It is a warning whose urgent necessity the Apostle had learned by his own sad experience; but it is a warning which we too should be very apt in our turn to neglect, if prayer were really so difficult and irksome as we sometimes imagine it to be. And therefore it may be useful to dwell, once again, on the topic of "prayer made easy." And at the outset the importance of the subject may be illustrated by an example. It has sometimes happened in time of war that, through some regrettable blunder, a general has been discouraged from attempting to occupy a commanding position, simply because he knew no way of approaching it except by an impossibly steep ascent. Whereas, if he had been better acquainted, as a general ought to be, with the lie of the country, he might, by means of a flank movement, have reached

* May 12, 1907 (Sunday within the Octave of Ascension Day).
† 1 Pet. iv. 7.

it by a comparatively easy slope. Just so in our spiritual warfare, it would be extremely regrettable if we were ignorant of the easiest approaches to what may rightly be called, of course in a strictly relative sense, the "commanding heights" of prayer.

We have already considered together the advantages of simplicity and of confidence, and incidentally of thankfulness and of cheerfulness, as aids to prayer; and indeed it would be impossible to emphasise these points too strongly. We will now consider another disposition which very greatly helps to make prayer easy; a disposition which in its turn is no less powerfully helped by prayer; and that is *humility*. And in this connection we may think of humility more especially as it implies, or includes, a deep and habitual conviction of our great and constant need of the divine protection and guidance.

In merely temporal matters it is of course a misfortune for a boy to feel, or rather to imagine, that he is, in familiar phrase, a "duffer," or "no good." It is a misfortune, because such a feeling is extremely discouraging; and discouragement is almost invariably harmful. But there is one department of life in which it is most desirable, and in which it ought not to be discouraging, to recognise that we really are "duffers"; and that is the department of spiritual affairs, of the affairs of our souls, of the affairs that have to do with eternity. And as on the one hand confidence in God helps to make prayer easy, so also, on the other hand, does this sense of our spiritual weaknesses, of our spiritual shortcomings, of our spiritual needs.

The really difficult and unhopeful case, in the

matter of prayer, is that of the man or the boy who, like the Pharisee in the Gospel, is thoroughly self-satisfied. Or, to take another familiar instance: "Behold I am rich, and have grown wealthy, and I want for nothing," says the Laodicean in the Apocalypse; and he is held up, for our pity and for our warning, as the typical example of "tepidity" or spiritual sloth.* We shall understand his case better, perhaps, if we translate his words into our own familiar speech. If he had been an English schoolboy instead of an Oriental bishop, he would probably have said: "*I'm* all right; there's nothing the matter with *me*." Now of course a boy may very properly say this (in politer terms) to anyone who should seek unduly to coddle him in matters concerning the health of the body. But before God, and in relation to the affairs of his soul, unless he at least begins to perceive that he is *not* "all right," and that there *is* something the matter with him, he cannot possibly find prayer easy, and he certainly will not pray fervently. Why should he? Why should he ask for anything, if he wants for nothing? Why should he have recourse to the Divine Physician, if there is nothing the matter with him? But if he is a sensible boy, he will understand that in spiritual matters he is always in need; that he needs the daily food of the soul no less than he needs his daily meals for the health of his body; and that though his body may be as healthy as you please, there are always ailments of the soul that need the healing hand of God. If he has not the sense to recognise this, then he runs the risk of being told, with the Laodicean, but perchance

* Apoc. iii. 16, 17.

too late: "Behold thou art poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked."

But consider the matter rather more in detail. Obviously if any one of us should have the misfortune to be in the state of mortal sin, or if, even though he has made his act of contrition, he is conscious of having committed a serious offence against God which he has not yet confessed, then a salutary fear, a haunting sense of his perilous position, should drive him to prayer—those short ejaculatory prayers which are so efficacious—as often as his mind is not actively engaged in other matters; and the cry: "O Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner"; or: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners," should with persevering repetition rise up to heaven from his heart or from his lips.

Or, again, if any one of us should be conscious that he is in danger of grievous sin by reason of some persistent or imminent temptation, whether from without or from within; then too his petitions for mercy, for strength to resist the attacks of the enemy, or for prudence to avoid them—these petitions should assuredly not be confined to set times of prayer, but should be frequent and habitual, and not less persistent than the temptation itself.

But even though, through God's great mercy and his own fidelity to grace, any one of us has been preserved throughout his life from mortal sin, or has, after a sharp struggle, emancipated himself not only from the miserable thraldom of evil habits, but also —as it might seem—from any immediate danger of severe temptation, the needs of his soul are yet by no means satisfied; nor can he on this account afford

to neglect the safeguards of humility and of prayer. For it is never safe to rest contented with that kind of goodness which chiefly consists in freedom from grievous sin. If we would protect ourselves against the danger of falling back again, or of falling as we have never fallen hitherto, we must push on (as a bicyclist must keep moving, if he does not want his machine to wobble and at last to fall)—we must push on, and show ourselves diligent in the positive and active service of God, and of our fellow men for God's sake.

"To die to evil," says Father Maturin, "is indeed, so far as it goes, good; but if there be no new direction into which the energy of life is turned, it is to be feared that the evil will soon regain control. . . . The listless, uninterested, and unoccupied life is the most dangerous of all. It is better to be interested in frivolities than to be interested in nothing. . . . The only remedy against doing evil is to do good; . . . to overcome vice by virtue. . . . The mind is won from wrong thoughts by right thoughts. . . . The current of life cannot be stopped, it can but be directed into another channel. . . . The Beatitudes all speak of a vivid, intense, active life, a clearly defined and positive aim, a turning from evil to do good, a search for happiness in right which wrong has failed to give." *

Now, when we strive earnestly and diligently to live such a life as Father Maturin here describes, a life that is not limp and listless, but "vivid, intense,

* Maturin, *The Laws of the Spiritual Life*, pp. 21, 22. I have ventured, for various reasons, to modify the punctuation of the passage.

active," when, instead of allowing ourselves to be ruled by the mood of the moment, we resolutely determine to pursue "a clearly defined and positive aim," and that the highest, we very soon find ourselves confronted with difficulties of various kinds, external or internal, or both. Not, of course, insuperable difficulties, or such as ought to daunt or discourage us; but such as should prompt us to take refuge in the all-powerful remedy of habitual and persevering prayer.

It is indeed comparatively easy, as we grow out of boyhood into maturer years, to attain to a respectable standard of external decorum and propriety; of what may be styled "gentlemanly" virtue; of what Newman has so forcibly described (in the second of his "Occasional Sermons") as "the religion of the Pharisee." That kind of religion or religiousness is very easily satisfied with itself, as indeed the Pharisees were. But our Lord has warned us that "unless [our] justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees," it will not avail us for the kingdom of heaven.* "Perfection," such perfection as is suited to the capacities of each, is what He bids us aim at; and at nothing short of this must we aim if we would be safe. We have neither the right nor the power to alter the laws of the spiritual life, as laid down by our Divine Master for all time.

Now it is not too much to say that the more resolutely and whole-heartedly and perseveringly a man seeks to reach the highest perfection of which he, individually, is capable, the more surely will he become aware of his many faults and failings. The

* St Matt. v. 20.

more closely he observes himself, and the more strictly he takes account of his thoughts, his motives, his intentions—to which God looks far more than to external acts—the more clearly will he come to perceive how far he falls short of any attainment that could afford him a reasonable excuse for self-satisfaction.

I say, the more closely a *man* thus proves himself; for in the days of our boyhood it is manifestly undesirable that we should busy ourselves overmuch with a minute self-scrutiny. For us it is enough to cultivate the highest motives, and to set before ourselves the highest aims, without worrying ourselves as to whether, in the past, our motives and intentions, in lawful matters, have been always of the best. Self-examination of this kind is a man's work; it is not the business of a boy. A boy's business is to keep pushing on.

Nevertheless, even in boyhood we may feel quite sure that—though we do not clearly perceive them—many failings and imperfections, to say the least, could be laid to our charge. We may be quite sure that we daily miss golden opportunities that lie within our reach if we were not too blind to see them; opportunities, for instance, of pleasing God by ejaculatory prayers or little acts of self-denial, opportunities of helping and encouraging our neighbour by words and deeds of thoughtful kindness, opportunities of gaining grace and merit for ourselves; opportunities which we should not miss if we were on the one hand more clear-sighted, and on the other hand more generous and courageous, in the service of our Lord. Many of these failings and imperfections are of such

a kind as to be visible only to the all-seeing eye of God; but the deep conviction that God sees in us much, very much, that calls for amendment and improvement—this conviction, which is after all an integral part of Christian humility, should be enough to lead us continually to call on Him for guidance and for strength.

Last week, the difficulties that we meet with in our spiritual life were compared to the hurdles in a hurdle-race. But in fact the conditions of the race which, as the Apostle tells us, we have to run, and which lasts from the first dawn of our reason till the day of our death—the conditions of this race are far more complicated, and the handicapping far more accurately adjusted, than would be possible in any sports managed by a committee of men or boys. You must imagine a hurdle-race run in the dusk, with complete uncertainty beforehand as to the length of the course, and as to the number of the hurdles and their distances apart; the one stipulation in your favour being that you should be able, by keeping a sharp lookout, to see each hurdle just in time, and that it should in no case be too high for your strength at that particular moment. Under such circumstances we should all be thankful for any glimmer of additional light, and for a reserve or margin of strength; and if these were to be had for the asking, we should not feel it irksome to ask for them.

But, comparisons apart, let us never forget, or be ashamed to acknowledge, that we all need strength and guidance, "strength from on high," and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles, after

our Lord's Ascension, needed this twofold gift, and our need of it is assuredly not less than theirs. Greatest of all is the need of those among us whose ambition it is to share, as priests, in the work that was committed to the Apostles. Nor, as was said the other day, can we hope to obtain it any otherwise than as they obtained it, by prayer. "Strength from on high," and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Neither the strength nor the guidance that we most need can be had from any one but God Himself. A friend, a confessor, a spiritual director, a preacher, may encourage us by means of timely words; and the example even of persons whom we hardly know, nay, even of those who are dead and gone, may stimulate us to emulation. But all these external helps are to little purpose so long as our will is weak. A flabby will is a far more serious defect than a set of flabby muscles, and strength of will can be had only from God, with the help of our own co-operation. We must be "endued with strength from on high," and from on high we must seek it by prayer.

So, too, as to guidance. There is no human substitute for the Holy Ghost. A confessor, or a spiritual director, or a preacher, may indeed give us most valuable assistance by laying down general principles, by "rubbing them in" (as we say), by explaining or illustrating them, and by suggesting sundry ways in which we may put them in practice. But the actual application of the great principles of the Gospel to the details of life, and more especially of our interior life—this is a business which of its very nature must be transacted between the soul and God. Interior guidance is the work of the Holy

Spirit alone, and no human aid can take its place. Even our Lord Himself, after so carefully training His Apostles for the space of three years, at the appointed time withdrew from them His visible human presence; not, certainly, because He had ceased to care for them, or that He loved them less than before, but in order to leave them, for their own good, to this interior guidance, supplemented—but only supplemented—by their mutual counsels. And although it would be a great mistake to draw hence the conclusion that we can dispense with human assistance (for this would be a kind of presumption), the fact should at least remind us that human assistance can but supplement, and can never supplant, the guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the wise teaching of that great master of the spiritual life, St Ignatius of Loyola, that a director of souls, when he has satisfied himself that a man is on the one hand thoroughly well instructed, and on the other hand thoroughly in earnest about his progress in virtue, ought, as far as possible, to "leave the Creator to deal with His creature."

"Strength from on high," and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Of the two, perhaps, we need strength, an indomitable strength of will, even more than guidance, for if we had the generosity and the courage not only to avoid what is unlawful, but also to choose the best within our reach among the things which are lawful, we should not lack such light as might be necessary for further progress.

"Strength from on high," and the guidance of the Holy Spirit; both at any rate are to be had for the asking, if only we will persevere in asking, as the

gravity of the matter deserves, even to importunity. "If any of you want wisdom," says St James, "let him ask of God, who giveth to all abundantly, . . . and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering," that is to say, without hesitation or misgiving.*

To sum up. *Esurientes implevit bonis.*—It is the hungry who beg for food, and to whom begging comes easy. It is the destitute poor who plead for alms, and whose pleading is importunate. The more deeply we are convinced of our spiritual destitution, and of our manifold spiritual needs, the easier it will be for us to pray, and the more efficacious our prayers will be. *Oratio humiliantis se nubes penetrabit*—"The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds."

* St James i. 5, 6.

XXIII

THE SERVICE OF GOD AND THE SERVICE OF MAN *

"He that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how shall he love God, whom he seeth not?"—1 ST JOHN iv. 20.†

IN considering together, on two recent occasions some points in connection with prayer, we have been concerned, as is plain, with our direct and immediate relations with God. And we can readily understand that, whether we recognise them as such, or no, these must ever be the most important element in our lives. But now we have to remind ourselves that our direct and immediate dealings with God do not constitute the whole of our lives; nor are they the only means whereby we are to attain to those habits of mature and solid virtue which it is the chief business of a Catholic education to form in us.

It is true that, as we were reminded on Ascension Day, our hearts and desires should be ever set on that everlasting home towards which we are fast travelling. It is true that, even while we are temporary sojourners here on earth, our conversation,

* May 26, 1907 (Trinity Sunday).

† From the Epistle for the First Sunday after Pentecost.

as St Paul tells us, should be in heaven, where we have an abiding city.* But it is also true that in the meanwhile we have duties which must be discharged here, not there; and that it is not by means of prayer and the sacraments alone, but also by the faithful performance of these earthly duties, that we are to secure our heavenly reward. Our prayers, even the most distracted of them, are indeed of priceless value; the feelings and emotions of sensible fervour are graces which we cannot too highly esteem or too jealously guard against avoidable distractions; the affective love of our Lord is by all means to be cultivated. Nevertheless it would plainly not be enough to protest with our lips the love that we bear to Him, or to foster in our hearts the consoling sentiments of affective love, if our conduct were such as to belie our words, and to be out of harmony with our professions. Our Lord Himself has told us: "Not every one that saith to me: Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Nor can we doubt that the more perfectly we carry out God's will, the greater will be our reward.

Now our duties towards God, other than those which are fulfilled by prayer and the reception of the sacraments, may be all summed up in the one word "service." If we serve God faithfully, we thereby show that we love Him sincerely; if we neglect His service, then there is something wanting to the full sincerity of our love. So much is plain. But perhaps it is not always so plain to us that our service of God here on earth very largely consists in

* Phil. iii. 20; *cf.* Heb. xiii. 14.

the service of our fellow men for God's sake. "He that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth," says St John, "how can he love God whom he seeth not?" And in these words the Apostle indicates the far-reaching principle — so ably developed by Father Maturin in his latest work—that the test of our true relations with God is in great measure to be found in our relations with our brethren. The habit of gratitude towards our brethren affords at least a presumption that we are grateful to God also. And a reasonable confidence in those who have some measure of authority over us, and a humble docility towards them in their several departments, is an indication that we are not wanting either in confidence or in docility in relation to the interior guidance of the Holy Spirit. And so of generosity towards our neighbour, and other desirable dispositions. And on the other hand a thoughtless ingratitude, a churlish obstinacy, a lack of docility where docility might fairly be expected, these things may sometimes be a sign that towards God, too, we are lacking in thankfulness, and that our dealings with Him are likewise infected with the pernicious poison of an unconscious pride.

And so, coming back for the moment to the idea of service, and remembering that service is the proof of love, we may recast the proposition laid down just now, in this form, viz., that if we faithfully serve our neighbour for God's sake, we thereby show that we love God sincerely; and if we neglect the service of man, then there is something amiss with the genuineness and full sincerity of our love of God Himself.

But what is to be understood by the "service" of our brethren? They are not all of them, in the ordinary sense of the term, our masters; some of them, perhaps, are our own servants; the majority of them are, roughly speaking, our equals. *Why*, then, should we serve them, and *how* should we serve them? To the first question the answer is simple enough. We should serve our neighbour because it is our Lord's wish that we should do so. He has shown that He wishes it by His own example: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister;" not to be served, but to serve.* And He has made it quite clear that He intended this example for our imitation. "Behold," He says, after washing the feet of His disciples, "I have given you an example, that as I have done unto you, so do you also."† And again, in allusion, as it would seem, to this same act of humble service: "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them. . . . But you not so; but he that is the greater among you, let him become as the lesser; and he that is the leader as him that serveth. For which is greater, he that sitteth at table or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at table? But I am in the midst of you as he that serveth."‡ These are only the most striking among a number of passages in which our Lord lays down the great rule and principle of service; a rule and a principle from which there is no escaping, if we are to be true to our divine-human Model.

Beyond all doubt or question, then, it is God's will that, throughout our lives, we should be in some very real and practical and tangible sense the servants of

* St Matt. xx. 28. † St John xiii. 15. ‡ St Luke xxii. 25-27.

our brethren; and any dignity or pre-eminence to which we may attain, instead of exempting us from this law, only makes it the more stringent. "He that is the greater among you, let him become as the lesser, and he that is the leader as he that serveth." But (to come to our second question) how is this law of service to be carried out? Once more the whole matter may be summed up in a single word; and that word is "unselfishness." Unselfishness is the sacrificing or subordinating of one's own personal aims, tastes, inclinations, and interests, in all matters that are morally indifferent, to the aims, tastes, inclinations, and interests of others, and more particularly to the higher claims of the general good. And it is precisely by thus sacrificing or subordinating our own personal aims and tastes and inclinations and interests to those of our neighbour, that we serve our neighbour, in the sense in which our Lord wishes us to serve him. The unselfish man or boy is just as truly a servant of the brethren, as if he wore an apron, and cleaned boots or carried plates and dishes. And with this difference, that unselfishness is of its nature gratuitous, whereas the services for which men don an apron are usually given in return for wages.

And now let us make some particular applications of the general principle of unselfishness. Every act of genuine kindness is of its nature an unselfish act. It does not come naturally to us to be kind; because kindness implies thoughtfulness, and where others are concerned we are naturally thoughtless and forgetful. We sometimes persuade ourselves, or allow ourselves to imagine, that we have adequately

fulfilled not only the strict duty but even the counsel of kindness, when we have done, perhaps after a grudging and tardy fashion, something that we have been asked to do; as though, by showing our unwillingness, and putting off the good deed as long as possible, we somehow enhanced the value of our service. Whereas not only ought we to understand that true kindness is shown less in the act itself than in the promptness and alacrity with which we show ourselves ready to oblige another in all lawful matters; not only should we (if we were wise) regard it as a privilege, rather than a burden, to be asked to do something for another; but our kindness ought —not as a matter of duty but as a matter of counsel and perfection—to go far beyond this. It should carry us forward to the point of being on the lookout for opportunities of doing what will please others, and in the first instance those who for one reason or another may reasonably expect that we should consider their wishes and their convenience. We shall all of us be very much surprised to find, when we wake up in the next world, how many golden opportunities we have missed in this matter of kindness, and how much of good we might have accomplished at so trifling a cost to ourselves. A kind word in season may give an amount of pleasure, and, what is much more important, of encouragement, the results of which are altogether beyond our calculation; and how little does a kind word cost us? It would cost us even less, often less than nothing at all, if only we could cultivate the habit of unselfishness. A kind word is a very word of God, from whose inexhaustible treasure of bounty all true kindness

proceeds. A kind word is like the seed in the parable, which, when it fell on good soil, sprouted up, and bore fruit an hundredfold. Nay more than this. A kind word has often the effect of preparing and softening, and rendering fruitful, the very soil of the heart on which it falls. And on the other hand a moody silence, or the manifestation of a desire to avoid another's company, not for some good and legitimate reason but on no better grounds than our own convenience for the moment, may cause pain that is far more than momentary or skin-deep, and may sometimes cause serious mischief. Instead of being like the good seed, unkindness resembles, rather, the blight that arrests growth and hinders fructification.

Kindness to those with whom we are brought into immediate personal contact is, however, by no means the only form of unselfishness. It has been mentioned first, on the principle that charity begins at home, and that unless it does begin at home it will not travel far abroad. But there is an unselfishness of a higher order, which shows itself in our attitude towards all that concerns the public good. One local illustration of this branch of the subject has been already touched upon, viz., the part we take—or should take if we can—in our school games. We may be disinclined to play, possibly from the same instincts that gave to so many of the saints in their early youth a distaste for games and amusements, possibly for other and less exalted reasons, *e.g.*, because we are lazy and disposed to a general slackness. But we show a real and very meritorious unselfishness when, for the sake of the general good,

we disregard or overcome our own inclinations and set ourselves conscientiously to "play the game" while it lasts. For the sake, be it observed, of the general good, and not merely for the sake of being like every one else and of following the fashion, for this latter would indeed be a poor and unworthy motive, not indeed positively sinful, but assuredly not positively virtuous, and often mischievous.

But the illustration which has just been given is after all of purely local and temporary significance. The days when games form an important part of our lives are for many of us fast drawing to a close; and our unselfish zeal for the public good should extend itself far beyond our school playing-fields. It is only for a few years that we are members of a school; but throughout our lives we shall be members of that great and world-wide institution, the Catholic Church, the kingdom of God upon earth. And it is in relation to the Church and to the interests of the kingdom of God upon earth that, throughout our lives, we shall have the best opportunities of exercising unselfishness in its highest forms, and of showing ourselves faithful and zealous servants of the brethren. Now the care and solicitude of the Church, as you know, is chiefly for her poor and more especially for the children of her poor, and for those missions in distant lands by means of which she is enabled to deliver her divinely entrusted message to those who have never heard the name or the gospel of Christ. And please God each one of us here present will, in the years to come, have abundant opportunities, and will use his opportunities, for promoting one or other, or all, of these great works, the relief of the destitute poor, the

provision of a Christian education for the children of the poor, and those foreign missions to which, among others, so many former students of this college have devoted their lives. But we need not wait for the years to come in order to make a beginning of this exercise of unselfish charity. Here and now you have your opportunities of denying yourselves little pleasures and gratifications for the sake of the great cause of Christian charity. It is by your use of these opportunities even more perhaps than by acts of personal kindness, even more than by your zeal for the general welfare of the school and of your school companions, that you will show yourselves, indeed, servants of the brethren. And, to conclude as we began, your service of your neighbour for God's sake will be the proof of your earnestness in the service of God; and by your earnestness in His service you will show the genuineness of your love. "He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how shall he love God whom he seeth not?"

XXIV

THE SACRAMENT OF THANKSGIVING*

"He hath made a remembrance of His wonderful works; He hath given food to them that fear Him."—Ps. cx. 4, 5.

"What shall I render to the Lord for all the good things that He hath done unto me?"—Ps. cxv. 11.

MOST wonderful among the works of God, more wonderful by far than the stupendous marvels of the physical creation, are the works of His mercy and of His love for man. And it is of these works of His mercy and of His love that He has made, and has bequeathed to His Church for all time, a living memorial in the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

Among human joys there is none so thrilling as that of a true and noble and unselfish love, provided only that it finds a fitting response; and on the other hand there is no pain so keen as that which is felt when a genuine and generous love is met with coldness and indifference. Yet all the joys that have ever arisen out of a merely human love are but as a faint shadow of His joy in our love, of whom it is written that "His delight is to be with the sons of men"; and the bitter pangs which tear and rend the

* May 30, 1907 (Feast of Corpus Christi). Preached in the Church of St Peter, Stonyhurst.

heart when man's love is unrequited, are as nothing in comparison with the unspeakable grief of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at our indifference and ingratitude to Him.

These, then, are the two points to which we may profitably devote some attention this morning, viz., first the wonders of God's love for us, and secondly the question: What return we shall make to Him?

Worthy of His love, of ourselves, we are not, and, of ourselves, could never be; and yet, as human love invests its object with the qualities which it would fain see there, even so, but far more efficaciously, He, as though in a very infatuation of tenderness, would in a manner make us worthy of His affection by lavishing upon us all that He has and all that He is. Are we poor, He would enrich us; sick, He would heal us; in rags and tatters, He would clothe us; filthy, He would cleanse us; selfish and proud, and obstinate, and stubborn, and hard-hearted, He would humble us for our good and bring us to a better mind, and "create a right spirit within us."

But His love is not satisfied with a tenderness that shows itself in gifts and mercies bestowed on us directly from above; for none of these gifts and mercies, after all, could lift us to His level as God, or could give us that sense of close yet reverential familiarity with Him which is an essential element in the love of God as it has been understood and exercised throughout the Christian ages. Raised above us, as God, by an infinite and inconceivable transcendence, He would become Man in order to put Himself in a very true sense on a level with us, that we might converse with Him the more

freely, and that, by treating Him as we would treat a revered human friend, we might enter, through our relations with His sacred Humanity, into the most intimate relationship with His very Godhead.

But more, much more, than this. "Being in the form (or nature) of God," says St Paul, "He emptied Himself, taking (to Himself) the form (or nature) of a servant," or slave, which is our own human nature.* And in that form or nature of a servant He would not only be our model in our service of God, but would proclaim Himself our servant too, if even so He might earn as His wage, or win by His humble fidelity, the love of our hard hearts. The attitude of Jesus at the feet of His Apostles, when He washed them as a preparation for the institution of the Holy Eucharist, was but a type of His attitude towards us, when, as it were, He casts Himself at our feet to plead for our love, and to beg our acceptance of His supreme gift of Himself.

Nor was this self-humiliation, this self-abasement, merely a matter of form or ritual, a divine etiquette, so to say, of condescension. He would in very truth demean Himself, for our sakes, to the lowest human estate. He would be born, not merely as a helpless child, but as an outcast in His own creation. He would live the life, not merely of a man, but of a man who must needs earn his livelihood by the sweat of his brow and the labour of his hands. For our redemption He would die, not such a death as is the common lot of humanity, but the cruel and dishonoured death of the vilest of criminals.

Such, described in merest outline, has been the

* Phil. ii. 6, 7.

manner and the measure of His measureless love for us; a love of unspeakable tenderness and unstinted gifts; a love of unwearying and lowly service; a love of unreserved self-sacrifice. These gifts, this service, this sacrifice — these are the wonderful works whereof He has left, as has been said, a living memorial in that all-holy Sacrament whose institution we commemorate to-day.

And now: *Quid retribuam?*—What return shall we make for this marvellous outpouring of God's mercy, for these wonderful works wrought on our behalf? Surely we shall wish to make the return that He desires and asks at our hands: love for love; gifts for gifts; service for service; sacrifice for sacrifice. O for a great, strong, manly, all-absorbing, over-mastering, passionate love of Jesus; a love that should make us sick of our selfishness and slackness; a love that should purge out the pestilent poison of our pride; a love that should engender in us a salutary contempt for that "bewitchment of trifling" which has so often come between us and Him, as a veil or mist hiding Him from our eyes.

Quid retribuam?—What return shall I make? A return of love for love. Yes. And, as a test and a pledge of the sincerity of our love, gifts for gifts, and service for service, and sacrifice for sacrifice. For the love which He asks of us is no mere sentiment; though sentiment, emotion, all that goes to make up enthusiastic loyalty should enter into it. But ours should be a love that expresses itself and manifests itself in action and in endurance. Of our gifts I will say no more than to remind you that what we give to the poor and to the Church for the carrying out of

her works of mercy we give to Him, and that what we withhold from the poor and from the Church, not for the reasonable purposes of life but for the gratification of an inordinate selfishness, we withhold from Him. But, more important far than material gifts, O for a generous, unswerving, indomitable will; O for a resolute determination to stick at nothing in His service who has never stinted in His humble and reverent service of us; a determination to be daunted by no obstacle, seduced by no counter-attraction, cajoled by no deceit, from doing what St Ignatius in his blunt soldier's way tells us that every man of common sense should do for so noble a King—*Offerent se totos ad laborem*—"they will offer themselves, without stint, to labour" in His cause.

Service for service, and sacrifice for sacrifice. We must be ready, if we are truly generous, not only to work for our Lord's sake, but to deny ourselves, and to endure the cross, for Him and with Him. The element of self-denial, self-renunciation, endurance, can never be eliminated from the plain teaching of the Gospel; nor can it be omitted from the reckoning of the return which we should make for that Sacrament which, while it is a memorial of all the works of God's love, is in a special manner a commemoration of the passion and death of our Lord. True love can never be content with a mere carpet and cushion service. Least of all can it be satisfied to see another suffer for us without desiring to make a return in kind. *Quid retribuam?*—"What return shall I make?" *Calicem salutaris accipiam*: "I will take the chalice of salvation, and will call upon the

name of the Lord." "The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" * said our Lord on the night of His agony. "My chalice indeed you shall drink," † He said to two of His chosen Apostles. And in each case the chalice of which He spoke was the chalice of suffering. It would indeed be presumptuous on our part to ask, as a present and immediate boon, for trials that are beyond our present strength; but it is by no means presumptuous to ask—and please God some of us at least may be moved to ask—for greater strength and greater courage, so that in God's good time we may be found fit and worthy to endure greater trials, and so to give greater proofs of our love.

This is indeed a day of high festival and of religious pomp and circumstance; it is a day on which the Church lavishes all the treasures of her ritual, of sacred music, of hallowed vessels and vestments and banners, on the business of showing honour to the all-holy Sacrament which is the supreme pledge of Christ's love for mankind. But all the outward ceremonial and all the solemn chants of to-day's celebration would miss their best and highest significance, if they did not correspond to the inward movements and music of the heart; the music of high aspirations, and the movements of generous resolves.

O Jesus, fill our hearts with Thy love. O Jesus, give us strength of will and courage to spend ourselves and to be spent in Thy service. O Jesus, give us at least the first beginnings of a desire to endure the cross for Thee; that so, rendering love for love,

* St John xviii. 11. † St Matt. xx. 23.

and service for service, and sacrifice for sacrifice, we may make a return not too miserably unworthy of all the wonderful works of Thy mercy and of Thy love, whereof Thou hast established in our midst a perennial remembrance.

XXV

THE SACRAMENT OF LIFE AND OF LOVE *

"As the living Father sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me."—ST JOHN vi. 58.

IT is possible that in what was said, yesterday, concerning a passionate love of our Lord, an enthusiastic loyalty to Him, and an unstinting devotion to His service, it may have seemed to some that an unduly high standard of virtue was being put before a mixed audience of schoolboys and ordinary lay Christians. The objection was not unforeseen, and the words were not spoken at random. They were the outcome of a deep conviction that the Church of God at the present day needs saints, both in the highest and in the widest sense of the term; that in view of the perils, educational and other, which beset her, she needs holy and devoted priests, and holy and devoted laymen, as urgently, to say the least, as in any previous age. And they were the outcome of a conviction, not less deep, that the practice of frequent and daily Communion, so earnestly recom-

* May 31, 1907 (Friday within the Octave of Corpus Christi). Preached in the Church of St Peter, Stonyhurst.

mended by Our Holy Father the Pope, as being most pleasing to our Lord and most salutary to ourselves, is the divinely appointed means whereby a great revival of Christian holiness is to be brought about, not merely within the lifetime of many of you here present, but, please God, among yourselves.

To you that are yet young, whether yours be the rich blessing of poverty, or whether you are exposed to the dangers and spiritual disadvantages that so often accompany the enjoyment of affluence and easy circumstances—to you who are yet young and have life before you, I would say from my heart, do not imagine, or allow yourselves to be persuaded, that you are *too* young to aspire to such a love of our Lord as I spoke of yesterday. Those youthful saints whose names are in the Church's calendar, and are familiar to you all, were but the most conspicuous examples among thousands who, almost from the first dawn of reason, have been fired with such a love, and by means of it have attained to holiness even in tender years. And why should that be unattainable by you which was attained by them? Is God's arm so shortened that He can but touch our poor country as it were with His finger-tips? Has England, once the Island of Saints, become a sort of *Ultima Thule* to His providence? Or is God's eternity so shrunken as not to embrace the century in which we live? And if not, why should not we, with His help, do what so many others have done before us? For the most part they lacked that superabundant means of grace which is not only offered to those of us who have the opportunity of profiting by it, but is pressed upon our acceptance, the priceless boon of daily Communion;

the daily renewal of the supreme pledge of our Lord's love for us and of ours for Him.

The love of our Lord, that is what blots out sin and strengthens the sinner against temptation. The love of our Lord, that is what, as it gradually takes possession of the heart, rouses and raises the tepid to fervour and the fervent to perfection. The love of Jesus, that is what makes saints. We cannot indeed expect, even by means of daily Communion, to arrive in a week or a month at the highest degree of this love, or even at the highest degree of which we, personally, are or may become capable; this must be the fruit and the reward of continued prayer, of strenuous and persevering labour, and of much self-denial; but O, if we would but try to understand how Jesus desires our love, how His Sacred Heart hungers and thirsts for it, surely we should believe it to be both possible and worth our while to attain to those fervent and generous dispositions which He fain would find and foster within us, when day by day He humbly knocks for admission, and begs us to receive Him as our guest.

For His dear sake let us not, through pusillanimity and lack of confidence, condemn ourselves to pace forever on the low dull level of respectable, middling, half-hearted virtue, substituting the sham gospel of modern mediocrity for the true, the inspired and inspiring Gospel of Christ. "Follow the fashion, swim with the stream, take things easily, for earth's sake attempt nothing heroic in religious matters, but make it your aim to be as like as possible to everybody else; and you shall receive the middling reward of your very middling performance." That is the

teaching of the unwritten gospel of mediocrity. "Be ye conformed to the likeness of Christ," nay, of Christ crucified; that is the aim set before us by St Paul, and by every approved Christian teacher from his day to our own. It is by our common effort to be Christlike, each in the measure and degree possible to himself, that we shall resemble one another in all that is worthy of imitation; and it is worse than foolish to set any lower ideal than that before ourselves. This, our common likeness to Christ our Lord, our common share in the life which He lives in us; this, and not mere human fashion and human convention, is the true principle of unity and uniformity. "As Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee [so] may they also be one in us." It was thus that our Lord prayed for His followers through all time, in the prayer which He made after the institution of the Holy Eucharist, and which is recorded for us in the seventeenth chapter of St John's Gospel. Nor can there be any more efficacious means of forming in ourselves the Christ-likeness at which we are bidden to aim, than the Sacrament of which our Lord Himself said: "As the living Father sent Me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me."

Keep Christ crucified daily before your eyes as your great Exemplar, strive by earnest labour and resolute self-denial to conform yourselves to this Model; and that you may be strengthened and encouraged in your arduous task, receive Him daily, or as often as you have the opportunity, in that Sacrament which is the memorial of His crucifixion and death.

"O Jesus, come, and be thrice welcome in the poor lodging which Thou hast chosen. It is unclean, but Thou canst cleanse it; it is bare, but Thou canst furnish and adorn it; it is cold and cheerless, but Thou canst kindle therein the fire of thy love. O Jesus, fill my heart with Thy love; a love generous, courageous, unselfish, after the manner of Thy love for me."

XXVI

JESUS THE SOUL'S FRIEND

"A faithful friend is a strong defence; and he that hath found him hath found a treasure. . . . A faithful friend is the medicine of life . . .; and they that fear the Lord shall find him."—ECCLUS. vi. 14, 16.

HAPPY is the man who has found a friend such as is described in the passage of Ecclesiasticus from which a few words have just been quoted. But alas experience shows that, in human life the ideal friend is none too common. Sometimes it happens that we think we have found him; but in the day of our greatest necessity he fails us. Either he stands revealed as, after all, a mere fair-weather comrade; or some cloud of misunderstanding comes between him and ourselves; or again, even with the best will in the world to help us, he is unable either to relieve our temporal wants, or, it may be, to minister to the deeper needs of the soul. For one reason or other, being weighed in the balance he is found wanting; and when we are most in need of counsel and assistance we find ourselves thrown back upon our own resources. So it happens, only too often, in merely human affairs. But we, who are

Christians, can never lack, if we will but turn to Him, an absolutely ideal Friend; One who will never turn from us or fail us in the hour of our necessity; One from whom nothing but the misguided act of our own free will can ever separate or estrange us; One who watches over us while we sleep and never ceases to remember us though He be forgotten; One who hastens to forestall, if we only knew it, the least of our wishes provided it be for our good, and who holds back only when that which we desire would be to our hurt; One with whom, as has been said before, there can never be the least shadow of misunderstanding, the least breath of coldness, except on our own part; One who, in spite of the inconstancy of our confidence, the meanness of our ingratitude, and the pride of our scorn, remains steadfast in His love; waiting, waiting, waiting, to welcome us back, so soon as we show ourselves minded to return to Him. And that Friend is Christ Jesus our Lord, on whose love for us all true Christian friendship is modelled.

And now, let me apply what has been said to the subject of Holy Communion, and in particular of daily Communion. And I will do so by means of an illustration from the Lives of the Saints.

We read of St Peter Claver that when he was a scholastic in the College of the Society of Jesus at Palma in the island of Majorca, he obtained permission to converse daily for a quarter of an hour with the holy Brother St Alphonsus Rodriguez, who was at that time porter of the house; and that to the counsels and encouragement of that wonderful but hidden saint he owed, in great measure, the extra-

ordinary and almost unparalleled self-devotion with which, during the last forty years of his life, he devoted himself to the humble service of the most degraded of God's human creatures, the negro slaves of Cartagena. Claver was fortunate indeed in having found a true "soul's friend"; and it may well be that if some of us could enjoy the privilege of frequent or even daily converse with so saintly a man, some of us at least would quickly advance not only from tepidity to fervour and from fervour to perfection, but would even attain to that higher kind or degree of perfection which is called holiness, in the stricter sense of the term, and should become, like Claver, saints formed and trained by a saint.

And yet we must remember that if Claver in this respect enjoyed a privilege that is denied to us, we on our part, or very many of us at least, enjoy a far more inestimable privilege that was denied to him. It is no mere human saint, but Christ our Lord Himself, who invites us to a quarter of an hour's most intimate conversation with Him every day of our lives, during the precious moments of our thanksgiving after Holy Communion. Who will not say that, of the two, this is the greater boon? Who will not recognise that, if only we will accept the invitation, and use those precious moments to the best advantage, our daily converse with Jesus should most powerfully help us to attain to the highest point of perfection that is within our reach.

But how are we to turn this time of our thanksgiving to the best advantage? Again we may recur to our example, helped out by yet another illustration. You know how the great masterpieces of sculpture

and of painting are multiplied and spread abroad in innumerable copies, from the simple photograph up to the full-sized replica, itself, perhaps, the work of a master hand. Now if it were our good fortune to possess such a friend as Claver had, one whose personal holiness we could venerate, and in whose spiritual discernment and enlightenment we could place implicit trust, the best thing that we could say to him at the outset of our more intimate relations would be, in effect, this: "My one desire is to be formed and fashioned after that supreme masterpiece of the divine art of mercy and love, Christ crucified; and I put myself in your hands that, by correcting my faults and drawing out and developing whatever is good in me, you may help me to achieve this likeness in myself." And this, with the necessary variants in the mode of address, is precisely what we may most profitably say to our Lord during the time of His tarrying with us after Holy Communion. And thus our thanksgiving will be directed to the eminently practical end of the amendment of our lives and our spiritual progress. Let us anticipate, together, now, our prayer after Communion to-morrow morning:—

"O Jesus, dwelling within me, form and fashion me to Thy likeness. Enlighten my understanding, that I may see what is amiss with me, my sins and those defects of character that make me so un-Christlike; my cowardice and softness, my selfishness, and above all my pride, that chief obstacle to a perfect union with Thee and to a perfect likeness to Thee who wert ever meek and humble of heart. Strengthen my will that I may resolutely renounce and put aside

everything that stands in the way of a more perfect love and service of Thee; give me courage to deny myself, and take up my cross daily, and follow Thee. I ask this, O Lord, not merely as a favour for myself, but for Thy dear sake, that being conformed to Thy likeness and living by Thy life, I may the more efficiently do Thy work, the life's work which Thou hast given me to do. O Jesus, fill my heart with Thy love."

XXVII

DAILY MASS AND—EXCUSES*

"A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse."—ST LUKE xiv. 16-18.†

AMONG the various ways in which our school life serves as a preparation, in religious matters, for our life in later years, this may be specified, that it is a time during which we acquire or assimilate certain general principles of conduct, and during which we ought to formulate—and during our holidays to put in practice—some definite resolutions in accordance with these general principles. And while it is true that the general principles are in themselves more important than the particular resolutions, it is also true that the latter are necessary if the former are not to remain in a merely vague or fluid condition.

Now, one particular practice, both for vacation-time and for our later lives, to which we may very profitably turn our attention at this season, is that of hearing Mass daily, or, if this cannot be done, as often as

* June 17, 1906 (Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi).
† From the Gospel of the day.

possible. It would of course be as foolish as it would be futile to recommend impossibilities. And everyone must be aware that, for many of us, daily Mass—either during the holidays or when we have entered on our profession—will be impossible. For many, but by no means for all. And these words are intended for the benefit of those—and they are also many—for whom it is not impossible, for those who certainly do not lack the opportunity, but who might, for want of consideration and encouragement, lack the good will, the courage, and the perseverance, which are needed for the steady carrying out of such a resolution.

And first of all, for the purpose of clearing up our ideas on the subject, let us ask ourselves, and let us take the trouble to answer the question, *why* shall we do well to make a serious effort to hear Mass daily, or at least as often as we are able?

The first and best reason is, that such is, unquestionably, our Lord's own wish. He came, as He has told us Himself, not to destroy but to fulfil the Old Dispensation, that is to say, not simply to do away with the ordinances of the Old Law, but to substitute for them something much better and more perfect. Now one of the standing ordinances of the Old Law was the daily sacrifice, offered each morning in the Temple on behalf of the whole people; and at this daily sacrifice it was the custom of all devout Jews, living in Jerusalem, to be present if they could. This sacrifice was, however, but a shadow of the Mass that was to be daily offered throughout the Christian centuries, not in one spot alone, but in every region of the habitable globe, or, in the language of Holy Scripture, "from the rising of the sun to its going

down,"* in order that the blessings to be derived from it might be more easily within the reach of the faithful of every nation and of every sort and condition.

And the wish of the Church is no less plainly expressed or implied than that of her Divine Master. For each day of the year she appoints a special Mass, determined either by the general calendar or by the various authorised uses of particular countries, or dioceses, or religious orders, even though on certain days some liberty of choice is allowed in the matter of Masses for the dead or other votive Masses. And although private Masses are approved by the Council of Trent, and have been in use since a very early age, yet the offering of the Holy Sacrifice is of its nature primarily a public function, in which, as the words of the appointed prayers repeatedly testify, the faithful have their appointed part.

For the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is not merely, like the rite which we know as Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, a function of comparatively recent and purely ecclesiastical origin, at which it is laudable to be present. It was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself as the supreme act of Christian worship, and the very centre of the religious life of the Church. The Holy Eucharist is, as we know, the chief of all the Sacraments bequeathed to the Church by her Divine Master; and both as sacrament and as sacrifice it is, in the prophetic words of the psalmist, "a memorial of His wonderful works." By the words of consecration is wrought, invisibly, a wonder greater than the creation of this visible universe; by the same is daily renewed a marvel

* Mal. i. 11.

comparable with that of the Incarnation and of the birth of our Saviour at Bethlehem, the house of bread: for here once again the great Creator of all things comes at the word of His creature, and places Himself at the mercy of the meanest of mankind, exposed as He is to all manner of ill-treatment and insult if the evil will of men should so dispose them. Here too is the wonder of which the changing of water into wine at Cana, and the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, were but types and faint foreshadowings. But chiefly and before all the Mass is a memorial—nay a continuance and a bringing home to us—of that great sacrifice offered on Calvary which is the source and fount of all our spiritual good, and the firm foundation of our eternal hope.

To the priest his daily Mass is the very mainstay of his life, the sunshine of his darkest day, an abiding motive for unshaken confidence in Him who, as He has conferred upon His unworthy minister such a privilege as this, assuredly will not withhold from him any grace that he may need for the fulfilment of his priestly duties whatever they may be. To the layman who has this boon within his reach, daily Mass affords an unsurpassed opportunity for beginning the day with earnest prayer and the very best kind of meditation; for no meditation can be more profitable than the serious remembrance of the passion and death of our Lord. The Mass is moreover the focus of union among Christians all the world over, bringing together in one common act of worship the saint and the sinner, rich and poor, East and West; and not only all nations but all the Christian ages as well, as we are very explicitly

reminded in the prayers of the Canon: *Communicantes* and *Nobis quoque peccatoribus.* Here all distinctions are obliterated; and men of all tribes and nations and peoples and tongues, of all states and conditions, rich and poor, prosperous and unfortunate, learned and simple, old and young, the strong and the weak, are brought together under the protecting shadow of the Cross. It is a rite in which the saints in heaven have their part, and its blessings overflow and drop as a refreshing dew upon the souls in purgatory.

Moreover there is a special reason which makes the daily hearing of Mass most desirable, wherever it is possible, in our own time. There are many indications that the part to be taken by the laity in the work of the Church will become more and more important in the course of this present century. It is not simply a matter of organising big meetings, of political agitation for the maintenance of our rights, or of any form of what may be called drum-and-trumpet activity; but of steady plodding work of a quiet, unobtrusive, unexciting kind, such as severely tests the genuineness of a man's zeal and his capabilities of perseverance. Now zeal of the quiet, self-denying, persevering kind will not be found except where the love of our Lord is a potent factor among a man's habitual motives; and the love of our Lord very quickly grows cold in the heart of anyone who does not take serious measures to keep the fire burning; and this is done principally by means of prayer. In plain words, there never yet was a man distinguished by true zeal who was not also a man of prayer. And a man who is thoroughly in earnest about his prayers, a man who practically recognises

the truth that prayer is the most important duty of the day, such a man will certainly not miss the opportunity of hearing Mass daily if only that opportunity lies within his reach, or rather if only it can be brought within his reach; for it may often be possible for a man to choose his abode, even at the cost of some inconvenience to himself, in the near neighbourhood of a church, for this very purpose.

All of us who are in any degree responsible for your education in the widest and truest sense of the term, hope and wish indeed that you may be successful and prosperous in your several professions and employments. But our hopes are far more earnestly set on this, that you may, according to your means and opportunities, co-operate in the maintenance and spread of God's kingdom on earth. This you will do if you are men of prayer, and not otherwise. And if you are men of prayer, then assuredly you will not willingly lose the opportunity of hearing Mass as often as it is possible for you to do so.

And now let us consider some of the reasons which men have for not hearing Mass daily. We may bring these reasons into relation with those of the expected guests in the Gospel parable, who, as we are told, when reminded of the invitation which they had received, and of the appointment which they had made, "began all at once to make excuse."

"The first said: I have bought a farm, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee, hold me excused." This gentleman's manners are unexceptionable. "Mr So-and-so's compliments, and"—he pleads necessity, and hopes that he may be excused. Now, of course, a real necessity is a valid excuse; and,

applying the parable to our subject, it would be a mistaken kind of devotion that would lead a man to neglect a genuine duty even for the sake of hearing Mass. That would be as though an officer of the court, whom the king had sent on a message, were to neglect the errand in order to stay in personal attendance on His Majesty. But the parable is plainly intended to teach us, among other things, that not everything that looks like an impossibility is really impossible, and not everything that looks like a necessity is really necessary. We have only to study the lives of distinguished Catholic laymen to see that men of extraordinary activity and diligence in their several professions have somehow contrived to hear Mass daily when a church or chapel was within reach; and if we were to ask them, they would tell us, everyone of them, that their work, so far from suffering thereby, has on the contrary been greatly helped by this daily act of homage and worship and devotion.

"And another said: I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them; I pray thee, hold me excused." This gentleman likewise sends his compliments and makes his excuses. But he cannot, like the other, plead "necessity." He has bought his oxen, and his bailiff has them in safe keeping, and there is really no particular hurry, and certainly no good reason why he should not keep his appointment. But he is excited about his purchase; a ploughing competition is within view; sport carries the day over civility; and he goes off to try his beasts, regretting to disoblige, but disobliging all the same; for to throw over an accepted invitation is in the East a

serious social offence. Now our interests do not lie precisely in the direction of yokes of oxen. But I have bought, or someone has given me, a new motor car, and "I go to try it." By all means, but surely it can wait half-an-hour! Could you not hear Mass, first, if it were only in case of a spill, you know? "Oh no! I must make a very early start for a speed trial trip. I must go to Land's End and back before dinner. I can't bother about Mass to-day. I'm off! So long! I have bought a motor, and I go to try it. I pray thee hold me excused."

"And a third said: I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." That settles the matter. No need to send a civil message; "I can't come," and there's an end of it. Now let us translate, and for the wife we will substitute—the doctor. "The doctor says that my brain is fatigued, and requires a thorough rest, and that (unless there's a dog-fight visible from my bedroom window in the early morning) I must not think of getting up before 8.30 during these precious weeks of vacation." Or: "The doctor says I must absolutely have an hour's bike-ride before breakfast—just to get an appetite, you know—so of course Mass, on week-days, is quite out of the question for me. Doctor's orders, it is generally understood, must be obeyed at all costs." It is, indeed, extraordinary how very obedient we can be when the doctor "orders" us something nice and comfortable. But what does that estimable man say to our sitting up till a late hour smoking and playing bridge? Or about our filling ourselves to repletion with caramels? Don't you think this might have something to do with our loss of appetite, and our

need of protracted slumbers in the morning? Is it perhaps the digestive organs that have been overworked, rather than the brain? And don't you think that a little self-denial might be, after all, the best medicine for our particular complaint?

"I am under the doctor's orders, and therefore I cannot come." Let us consider this excuse a little more closely. A reasonable care of our health, in order that we may be the better able to serve God with all our strength is, of course, commendable, as St Ignatius himself tells us; and unquestionably this reasonable care of our health may under certain circumstances afford a good and valid motive for omitting our daily hearing of Mass. But it is well to be on our guard lest a moderate and reasonable care of our health should degenerate into an immoderate and unreasonable solicitude, to the great detriment of our spiritual life. We must not forget that we are soldiers of Christ, engaged in a very real warfare against the powers of evil. Now, as an eminent authority on military affairs has somewhere put it, a limited allowance of iced champagne would be very good for the health of officers and men engaged in marching through the Soudan. But he adds, in eff ct, that the man who expects, on a campaign, to have everything that would be good for his health, had better stay at home with his mamma. Bullets for instance, are not usually considered a wholesome diet, yet the soldier must be ready for an occasional bullet. Health is, after all, a means, not an end in itself; it is a subordinate, not the supreme consideration. A soldier must do his best, often under difficulties, to keep himself fit for service. But the

soldier's health is for the soldier's service; and it would be turning things topsy-turvy to expect the service to be organised for the benefit of his health. All of which, for our present purposes and as applied to our present subject, amounts to this, that we must not be too much afraid of catching a cold as the result of getting up in time for Mass on a fine morning in August or September, or of putting off our bike-ride till after breakfast.

I have dwelt a little on this topic because, only the other day, I received a letter from a venerable and very hard-working priest (not a Jesuit), a man of long and wide and varied experience, in which he tells me that, in his judgment, an undue solicitude about health is one of the chief causes which in these days hinder good Christians from rising above mediocrity in virtue, and from attaining to that Christian heroism which they might reach if only they had a little more courage. It is not, of course, to be expected that we should all be heroes, but it would be a comfort to think that at least a certain percentage of us are shaping that way. And, by way of a beginning, do not, as I have said, be unreasonably afraid of catching a cold by early rising for the sake of hearing Mass, or of suffering from want of sleep. "Early to bed and early to rise" is an old-fashioned recipe for good health which has not yet lost its value.

And now, let us look at the matter, for a moment, from another point of view. To miss Mass, when we have the opportunity of hearing it without interference with any other duty, is to incur a certain loss. The gain is often extremely uncertain. And even

though it were certain, yet if it should be a merely temporal gain, it is not to be weighed in the balance with what we lose; for there is no common measure as between the temporal and the eternal.

Let me illustrate this aspect of the subject by a parable which is not read in any of the four Gospels, but which may serve its purpose. A boy was on a visit to the business establishment of a rich uncle who did a very large trade with Japan. While he was there, the old gentleman was suddenly called away, and rather imprudently left Master Hopeful in his office, with the run of the place. When he came back, the youth complimented him on the excellent quality of his tobacco and of his cigarette papers. I regret to say that the uncle's language left something to be desired in point of politeness, when he discovered that his nephew had used for the making of his cigarettes no less than half a dozen hundred-pound notes of the Imperial Bank of Tokio. The application of the story is plain enough. It may help us in some small degree to understand how unspeakably foolish we shall discover ourselves to have been, when, on waking up in the next world, we discover what we have lost by wasting on passing pleasures and aimless self-indulgence so many of those invaluable morning half hours which might have been spent in the hearing of Mass. Thus employed they would have been drafts upon the Bank of Heaven, entitling us to an everlasting reward; whereas we have consumed them in gratifications which have vanished like smoke. The loss will then be seen to have been not only irreparable, but immeasurably greater than the burning of all the bank-notes that ever were

printed. And what shall we have gained in exchange? A bitter memory of our own folly. Let us hope, however, that none of us will be so foolish as this, but that every one of us will resolve that come what may we will never—when it is possible to avoid the loss—forego the blessing of daily Mass.

XXVIII

A TABLE SPREAD IN THE WILDERNESS*

Parasti in conspectu meo mensam, adversus eos qui tribulant me—"Thou hast spread a table before me, against them that afflict me."—Ps. xxii. 5.

THIS college, as we all know very well, had its beginnings, abroad, in dark days of persecution, in days when every scholar in the establishment was fully alive to the fact that, on his return to his native land, he would be liable, if a priest, to a felon's death, and, if a layman, at least to harassing fines and many vexations under the penal laws. And now, after a long interval of comparative prosperity, we are once more entering, as it would seem, on an era of the gravest danger to the Church in this country. Until quite recently, indeed, many excellent persons denied or even derided the notion that any serious crisis was impending. But now, in view of the present position of educational matters in England, it is impossible to shut our eyes to the existence of the peril; and it would be difficult to exaggerate its magnitude. We have now

* For the Monday within the Octave of Corpus Christi. Adapted from a sermon preached in 1906.

the clearest possible indication of the sort of results which a powerful party in the country is determined to bring about, and there is only too much reason to fear that the educational views of this party are steadily gaining ground. At present it is undenominationalism, as it is called, or religion without dogma, which the Government majority is seeking gradually to force upon our schools, elementary and secondary alike. But religion without dogma leads sooner or later to secularism, or no religion at all; and secularism serves to prepare the way—as has been seen in France—to an active hostility to all religion. It is now almost thirty years since the late M. Gambetta uttered his famous phrase: "Clericalism is the enemy"; and last year his words were quoted with applause in our own House of Commons, a fact unprecedented in parliamentary history. Now it so happens that just about the same time a French statesman declared in a public speech that M. Gambetta's phrase is already out of date in France, and that the cry ought now to be: "God is the enemy." "We have banished God," he declared, "from the school and the hospital; it is time that He were banished from the country altogether." And it may be that in England, too, the section of the populace that would echo even this sentiment is destined to grow in numbers and in strength.

If we are wise, then, we shall do well to be prepared for nothing short of a new era of persecution, a persecution of the modern pacific type, which dispenses with the rack and the gallows, and proceeds by way of confiscation; a persecution all the more dangerous because it is so insidious, and in particular because it will not directly encroach upon or even threaten the

ordinary comforts of the layman's life. If indeed he is such as we should wish him to be, he will at the cost of very considerable sacrifices come to the aid of the Church in her trouble. But if he should choose, rather, to play the part of a selfish Gallio, caring for none of these things, he may continue to live and amuse himself at his ease to the end of his days, without allowing himself to be distressed about what does not immediately affect himself.

But if we do care about these things, if we are not indifferent and unconcerned about the kingdom of God on earth, we cannot fail to see that such a process of pushing religion into a corner must lead, sooner or later, to the falling-away of many Catholics from the faith—or at least from the practice of the faith—which is their birthright. Even in the years gone by we have had to deplore what is called "the leakage," that is to say the lapse into indifferentism, of a large percentage of boys and youths—especially of the humbler classes—after they have left school. What the losses will be if the day should come—and it may be near at hand—when they no longer have any Catholic schools to go to, God alone knows.

Is there then no remedy, no compensation at least, for those evils? Of course there is. God is wiser and stronger than all His enemies. While many outwardly and visibly fall away, under temptations and difficulties which will go far to excuse their defection in the sight of God, those who are faithful, being called on for greater sacrifices, and being made to feel more keenly their isolation and separation from the non-Catholic world, will, it may be hoped, greatly increase in fervour and devotion. In other words, our external

losses will, please God, be compensated by what His Holiness Pope Pius X. has called a great "revival of the Christian spirit" among those who remain.

But in bringing about this revival, we may be very sure that God will make use of human instruments. Throughout the history of the Church it has been so. In every crisis which has seemed to threaten her welfare, or even her very existence, God has raised up holy men, men distinguished by their gift of prayer and by their spirit of penance and self-denial, men absorbed in union with God and on fire with the love of Jesus Christ crucified, and therefore not merely eager to take their part in carrying out His work, but ready to share in His sufferings and humiliations, men who—often without any advantages in the form of great natural gifts—make their influence felt, in ways known to God alone, for the regeneration of society. And such, please God, some of you will be; while others, if they do not attain to the very heights of Christian holiness, will at least be stirred and stimulated by the known dangers of the Church to something better than that sort of easy-going self-indulgent life to which we are all of us so prone.

And such being—so far as we may judge from the past—the nature of the remedy or compensation for the evils that afflict the Church, we may very thankfully recognise that God in His providence has placed within our reach a means whereby this remedy may be applied and this compensation realised. *Parasti in conspectu meo mensam, adversus eos qui tribulant me*—"Thou hast spread a table before me, against them that afflict me." In two letters written on behalf of the present Pope by

Cardinal Gennari, the writer declares that the Holy Father looks to daily Communion as the one means above all others by which is to be brought about that revival of the Christian spirit which is, as he says, so urgently needed at the present time. And in the preamble to the decree on daily Communion with which we are all now familiar, the practice is said to be "a thing most desirable in these days, when religion and the Catholic faith are attacked on all sides, and the true love of God and genuine piety are so lacking in many quarters." It is, then, no fanciful or far-fetched notion to look to frequent and daily Communion as affording a sure basis of well-grounded hopes in this day of the Church's trial; and the coincidence between the date of the Papal decree on this subject, and the first declaration of the educational policy of the present government, may be looked on as providential rather than merely accidental. Indeed the comparison of events and circumstances may be carried further. For as it was in the year 1902 that the agitation which has led up to recent developments first made itself heard, so it was also in 1902 that Leo XIII. issued the first Encyclical of modern times in which the faithful were explicitly exhorted to frequent and daily Communion. And as the political agitation of 1902 was made light of as being the work of a few noisy malcontents, with no real power behind them, so the Encyclical of 1902, with its exhortation to frequent Communion, in great measure passed unheeded, or was thought to be so wide and general in its terms as not to call for particular and practical application.

Now, however, there is no longer any reason for

doubt or hesitation. *Fecit nobis magna qui potens est*—He that is mighty has done a great thing for us, in putting this boon within our reach; and *Faciet nobis magna qui potens est*—the boon is itself a pledge that He will do yet greater things for us if only we will avail ourselves of it, if only we will live in close union with Him, if only with docility and generosity, and a resolute determination to overcome all obstacles, we will be responsive to His grace.

No one, as some of you are aware, has more forcibly or impressively urged upon the Catholic laity of England the use of this remedy for present evils than one who is himself a layman, and who can bear witness from his own experience to the spiritual benefits of frequent Communion, for he has himself been a daily communicant for many years. Among the speakers at the great meeting held in the Albert Hall, Kensington, on May 5, 1906, to protest against the Education Bill with which we were then threatened, was Mr (now Sir) Charles Santley, the famous singer of days gone by. By contrast with the other speakers, who, appropriately enough dwelt on the injustice of the Bill, on the reasonableness of the Catholic claims, and on our determination to maintain and defend these claims by every means in our power, Mr Santley left the Bill alone, and bid us look into ourselves and mend and improve our own ways, that we might be less unworthy of that divine assistance without which we cannot hope to promote the interests of the kingdom of God on earth. In the words of a leading Catholic newspaper: "Mr Santley, like a prophet new inspired, struck a spiritual note and delivered a lay sermon which no

other man, priest or layman, dared have delivered in that hall. The people held their breath, as . . . his simple faith, transparent sincerity, and virile presence held them. . . . Prayer and fasting, daily Mass and . . . Communion, life [in union] with our Lord, and unbounded faith he preached, and the audience wondered at the strange thing that was happening." And a little later his words—or some of them—are quoted: "Mr Santley said: When our Lord descended the mountain after the Transfiguration, a young man was brought to him possessed by an evil spirit, which His disciples had been unable to cast out. At the present moment we have the evil spirit amongst us, and our holy Mother, the Church, is tormented by it. Our Lord said, when His disciples asked Him why they could not cast out the spirit, that it was only to be cast out by prayer and fasting." And we may well apply this answer to ourselves in the present instance. "We may deny ourselves some pleasure"; a mild phrase for a man to use whose own life is one of austere simplicity and rigorous self-denial. And again: "Our prayers can remove mountains of opposition. We can have recourse to our Lord in daily Mass and in Holy Communion, which the Holy Father has recommended to be received daily; not merely frequently, but daily."

XXIX

THE DIVINE PHYSICIAN *

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let all that is within me bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all that He hath done for thee. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy and compassion. Who satisfieth thy desire with good things: thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's."—Ps. cii. 1-5.

In the course of the three years of His public ministry, our Lord Jesus Christ not only set an example to all those who in ages to come were to carry on in His name, throughout the world, the work which He had begun within the narrow limits of Palestine, but He also gave a specimen, as it were, of the manner in which, through all time, He would deal with men by means of His holy sacraments.

He gave, in the first place, an example to Christian pastors and spiritual directors, as to their manner of dealing with the souls that would be committed to their charge, or would fall under their influence. For while on the one hand He spared no pains in training to the highest perfection that little band of chosen disciples whom He treated as His close and

* For Tuesday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

intimate friends, on the other hand, through His relations with the very outcasts and riff-raff of society, He incurred, and most willingly incurred, the reproach expressed in the words: "This man is the friend of sinners." * And so it should be with every Christian pastor of souls. He, too, should spare no pains in training to the higher life of perfection those who are capable of it, while on the other hand he should be, in the highest and best sense, "a friend of sinners"; and if he fails in either of these two particulars, he is false to his sacred trust.

But the point to which we may more particularly direct our attention is this, that the action of our Lord on mankind through the sacraments is precisely analogous to those features of His human ministry on earth which have just been mentioned. For the few the sacraments are the chief means of attaining to high perfection, while for the many they are the antidote to temptation and sin. In and by the sacraments Jesus shows Himself, through all time, as "the friend of sinners." He had come, as He Himself declared, in the character of the Divine Physician of mankind; and the sacraments are the medicines which, on his departure from this earth in visible human form, He bequeathed and entrusted to the Church for the healing of men's spiritual maladies and diseases. It is the sick, He declared, who have need of the physician, not those who are hale and strong. And it is by reason of our diseases and manifold weakness, not of our virtues and spiritual strength, that we need and ought to make use of the sacraments. By this it is not meant that there is

* St Matt. xi. 19.

any man living who can afford to dispense with these means of grace; for indeed the best of men are those who are most deeply conscious of their own urgent necessities and their innumerable shortcomings, just as it is the wisest and most learned of mankind who are most keenly alive to the extreme narrowness of the range of their mental vision. But what is meant is this, that we must never allow a sense of guilt and sinfulness to make us feel that we are cut off from access to Him who was and is indeed the friend of sinners; from the Shepherd who is ever in search of the wandering sheep; from the Mediator and the Physician whose function and desire it is to forgive all our iniquities and to heal all our diseases.

This point, in its special application to the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, is very clearly brought out in the decree of December, 1905, "On Daily Communion," where it is most plainly and explicitly laid down that this great boon is to be regarded not as the reward of our virtue, but as a remedy for our weaknesses or infirmities. A man would be altogether on a wrong tack if he were to say to himself: "I am so good that I deserve daily Communion." He would be much nearer the truth—indeed he would be as near as possible to the truth—if he were to say: "I am so weak that I need it." Nay, can we not all of us say this? For we all of us without exception have our "weaknesses and defects"—to keep to the very words of the decree, and for all weaknesses of whatever kind this is the sovereign, nay the divine remedy. We rightly regard as a charlatan the man who professes to cure all bodily diseases from pimples to paralysis and from lumbago to leprosy by one

particular patent medicine. He might as well undertake to impart every branch of human knowledge by a single demonstration on the blackboard. But whereas, by a necessary limitation of our human powers, we can only deal piecemeal and separately either with objects of knowledge or with the ailments of the body, God has no such limitations, and as He knows all truth by a single unchanging timeless act of knowledge which is His very Self, so by one act which again is His very Self He can minister to all our spiritual ailments. It is He, the Divine Physician, who alone can provide a real and genuine panacea for every infirmity, and this He does in that Sacrament of love wherein He gives Himself as the medicine of our souls.

Let us, then, once more ask ourselves the question: Which of us can say that he is not so weak as to need this daily medicine, so long as it is within his reach? And I say, so long as it is within his reach, because when it is out of our reach, God can make good the lack of it by His interior grace.

Which of us, then, does not need it? For it is to be remembered that the weaknesses or infirmities of our souls are of many kinds. There is the weakness and faint-heartedness which hinder and hamper the man who ought to be aiming at real holiness of life, with its heroism of self-denial, self-government, self-effacement, self-sacrifice, and keeps him on the comfortable level of a somewhat easy and merely affective piety. There is the weakness of depression and discouragement, which is answerable for so many failures, or comparative failures, in the spiritual life. There is the weakness of a fickle and wayward will,

which betrays us into so many daily faults, which we have not the courage or the steadiness of purpose to overcome. There is the weakness which makes us an easy prey to human respect, so that we are ashamed or afraid to strike out for ourselves, and to follow what we know to be the right course, or the better course, for fear of the open ridicule or tacit disapproval of others. And on a still lower level there is the weakness with which we yield, it may be, to the assaults of more grievous temptations, the weakness which exposes us to the danger—perhaps to more than the danger—of mortal sin.

These different kinds and degrees of weakness are, of course, not all found in the same person at the same time. But the point is that, for *every* kind and degree of spiritual infirmity, Holy Communion, daily Communion, is, under the requisite conditions, a sovereign remedy.

O that I could find words which would bring home to your minds and hearts the important truth that daily Communion is not the peculiar privilege of the pre-eminently pious. To say this is not to undervalue piety. On the contrary, piety is a quality or a habit of which we cannot have too much, provided that it be of the spontaneous and genuine sort; and we cannot be sufficiently thankful to those who, day by day, in the most unobtrusive fashion, set us a good and edifying example in this matter. But we are not all of us pre-eminently pious, and for the moment I am concerned with those whose worst enemies could not accuse them of any reprehensible or even remarkable excess of devotion. And to them I say, and would say it with all possible emphasis,

that so far is daily Communion from being the peculiar privilege of the specially pious and devout, that for none is it more important—not to say necessary—than for one who should, alas, have fallen into habits of almost daily sin, habits which have become for him a slavery from which it might seem an almost hopeless task to emancipate him. To such a one—if there were any such among us—I would say: Here is the remedy which you need, and of which with your confessor's approval you may avail yourself without fear, *on one condition alone.* And that condition is—*that you seriously desire your freedom.* That is to say, provided that in your sane and sober moments, when you are not under the immediate pressure of temptation, you so efficaciously wish to free yourself from your slavery that you are determined to avoid at least the proximate occasions of grievous sin, then there is nothing to hinder you from making the fullest use of the divine remedy which our Lord in His great mercy and love has placed within your reach, and of which He invites you to avail yourself. And if, after having taken up the practice of daily Communion, you should fall yet again, nay even though you should fall many times, do not be disheartened, but seek forgiveness without delay in the sacrament of penance, so that nothing may hinder you from your daily recourse to the Divine Physician. Sooner or later, and probably in a very short time, you will find your cure; if only you will be in earnest; if only you will persevere; if only you will not allow yourself to be discouraged by your own weakness and waywardness, which our Lord understands far better than you understand it yourself.

XXX

SEEKING JESUS*

"And behold men brought in a bed a man who had the palsy; and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Jesus."—ST LUKE iv. 18.

TO anyone who is accustomed to attend to the moral and religious significance of the incidents related in the Gospels, the words which have just been quoted are full of instruction; and they may readily be brought into connection with the subject which is at present engaging our attention, viz., frequent and daily Communion. But it will be useful first of all to say something about them in their own general bearing; and by way of introduction we cannot do better than to recall to mind the entire passage from which they are taken. It runs as follows:—

"And it came to pass on a certain day, as He sat teaching, that there were also Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, that were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and [from] Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was to heal them. And

* For Wednesday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

behold men brought in a bed a man who had the palsy; and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in, because of the multitude, they went up upon the roof, and let him down through the tiles with his bed into the midst, before Jesus. Whose faith when He saw, He said: Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the Scribes and Pharisees began to think, saying: Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? And when Jesus knew their thoughts, answering He said to them: What is it you think in your hearts? Which is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say: Arise and walk. But that you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the sick of the palsy) I say to thee: Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house. And immediately rising up before them, he took up the bed in which he lay; and he went away to his own house, glorifying God. And all were astonished, and they glorified God. And they were filled with fear, saying: We have seen wonderful things to-day."

The narrative is one of those which best serve to illustrate the characteristic differences in treatment and method between the Gospels of St Matthew, St Mark, and St Luke. St Matthew is content to record very briefly that "they brought to Him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed," without any reference to the special circumstances which marked their arrival. St Mark, who throughout his Gospel repeatedly makes mention of the crowds which pressed upon our Lord, and of the inconvenience which they

caused, tells us that, on this occasion, "He was in the house, and many came together, so that there was no room, no, not even at the door"; while St Luke on the other hand lays stress on the representative character of the gathering, composed as it was of "Pharisees and doctors of the law" from all the towns of Galilee and Judea, and even from Jerusalem itself. Again St Peter (whose account of the incident St Mark has committed to writing) was evidently much impressed by the enterprise of the four bearers, who mounted on to the flat roof of the house and ἀπεστέγασαν τὴν στέγην . . . ἐξορύξαντες, κ.τ.λ., that is to say, excavated a hole big enough to enable them to let down, as he tells us, "the bed wherein the sick man lay." Not simply the bed, for that was a mere mat or thin mattress which might have been rolled up and pushed through a smaller aperture, but the bed at full length, "with the man in it" as we might say. But when we turn to St Luke we find a difference, although the facts mentioned are identical with those which are related by St Mark. The point which St Luke's "Gospel of Mercy" makes prominent is not so much the striking and decidedly drastic process of making a large hole in the roof, but rather the eagerness of the bearers to lay their sick friend before our Lord. "*And they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before Him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in,* because of the multitude, they went up upon the roof, *and let him down* through the tiles, with his bed, *into the midst, before Jesus.*" The two phrases, St Mark's "the bed wherein the man lay" and St Luke's "the sick man with his bed," may be taken

as characterising the contrast between the two narratives.

And here we may well pause to draw a lesson for ourselves. We all of us without exception suffer to a greater or less extent from spiritual paralysis. Not even the best of us can flatter himself that he is as diligent and energetic in the affairs of eternity as men of the world are in the pursuit of pleasure, or in striving to amass a fortune, or to gratify their social or political ambitions. "The children of this world," as our Lord once said, "are wiser in their generation than the children of light." And as they are wiser, so also they are more vigilant and active. Most of us, if only we were quite honest with ourselves, would have to acknowledge a more or less persistent tendency to take things rather easily, to shirk self-denial, and to shrink from persevering efforts, in all that concerns the spiritual life. Now this tendency to take things easily, and to slacken off, may be likened to paralysis in a comparatively mild form. It is like an incipient disease about which the doctor warns us that it will become chronic and much more serious, as time goes on, if we are not careful about our diet and our exercise. And in spiritual matters the diet and exercise that we need are precisely that heavenly food and medicine of which our Lord invites us to partake as often as we can, and the earnest prayer by means of which we prepare ourselves for its reception, and which we offer by way of thanksgiving after we have received it. There can be no better antidote to the tendency to settle down to a comfortable mediocrity of virtue than the daily recourse to Him who in the Sacrament

of His love is both the physician and the medicine of our souls.

But there is a far more serious kind of spiritual paralysis than that which has been mentioned. It is found in the case of those whose will appears to be almost powerless to resist severe temptation, in the case of a man who finds himself falling again and again into grievous sin, so that he seems to be all but incapable of making a firm purpose of amendment, or of holding to his purpose when it has been formed. Here we have the disease in its most dangerous form, all the more dangerous because it is not outwardly visible, and does not incapacitate a man for the ordinary business or the ordinary pleasures of this mortal life. And here too the remedy is the same. Do not wait and linger and delay until the malady has become incurable, but go at once, go frequently, go daily to Him who healed the paralytic in testimony of His power to heal that worse disease from which the sick man was suffering, the disease of sin.

It is hardly possible to repeat the truth too often or too insistently, that whether our case be of the milder or of the more dangerous type, the remedy is the same, viz., recourse to the Divine Physician, and the use of the means for our healing which He daily offers us, and which is none other than Himself, our food and our medicine.

It is sometimes said, by those who in their ignorance are hostile to the true faith, that in the Catholic Church the priest stands between the sinner and God. But so far is this from being the case, that the chief effort of every priest who has any charge of

souls must be—if he is faithful to his trust—to do that which the bearers in the Gospel narrative so earnestly sought to do, viz., to find means to bring in the sick man and to lay him at the feet of Jesus, or rather to excite in the sinner himself the desire to seek and to find our Lord. For even in the case of the paralytic, the bearers would hardly have ventured on the course which they adopted, had they not been well assured of the man's own desire to be brought into the presence of the great Healer of men.

And we too shall find, very often, that the approach is blocked, as the approach of those men to our Lord was obstructed by the throng that had gathered round the door. There are multitudes of competing interests, as, later on, there will be multitudes of competing cares, which either habitually or frequently stand in the way of our reception of the Sacraments. Very often they are not, in reality, serious obstacles at all; but we allow them to hinder us, either because we are not thoroughly in earnest, or because we allow ourselves to be deluded into the belief that they are insuperable. The temptations of our lower nature are, it may be, insistent; the world, with its maxims and conventions, can be very peremptory; and the devil may be supposed to take charge of the delusions as his own special department.

Sometimes our evil passions cry out, as they did to the great St Augustine in the agony of his conversion, that life will be intolerable without their indulgence; that at least we must wait a little; that we will make an act of contrition next week or next month, or put off squaring our accounts till our next retreat (which

perhaps we shall never make), but that meanwhile we must needs have our miserable fling. Or our worldly friends tell us that it is not "good form" to be too devout, that we must not be singular, that it is ridiculous to pay attention to what priests say—narrow-minded men who have no real experience of life; and the devil endorses all this and perhaps adds a special warning of his own against Jesuits, whose principles and methods, he will assure us, are quite unsuited to the present advanced and enlightened age. Or perchance we persuade ourselves that we are too busy, too preoccupied with our work, to be able to give the necessary time for preparation, forgetting that there can be no better preparation for receiving our Lord than the diligent performance of the duties which He has given us to do. Or we are so excited about our holiday occupations and amusements that we cannot spare a thought for so serious a matter as the reception of His great gift of Himself, forgetting again that while on the one hand our Divine Saviour is no enemy to legitimate enjoyment, it is precisely in times of necessary relaxation that we most need a reminder and a help to keep us on our guard against the many dangers that beset us at such seasons. Such are some of the obstacles which hinder us from the acceptance of our Lord's invitation to have recourse to Him, and to make His Body and Blood our daily bread and our daily medicine.

Now there is a homely old English proverb to the effect that "where there's a will there's a way." And the incident which we have under our consideration this morning might be taken as an illustration of this

proverb as applied to spiritual matters. Here were these four men, determined, as we have seen, to lay their friend before our Lord. If they had been faint-hearted, they would have turned back on seeing the crowd, or at least they would have desisted from the attempt when they found that the crowd was not disposed to make way. If they had been faint-hearted they would certainly have scouted the proposal, probably made by the youngest among them, to go up on the roof and break through. It was such a very unconventional proceeding, not at all in accordance with established customs and the ordinary usages of life, and—what would people say? Fortunately for themselves and their friend they had small regard for customs and conventions, and for the opinions of a lot of villagers, or even of those eminently respectable and "sensible" persons, the Pharisees and doctors of the law who were assembled inside. They wanted just one thing, and this alone they were bent on achieving. It was, so to say, a matter of life and death for the sick man, and manage it somehow they would—and they did.

And we shall acquire some share at least of that spirit of grim determination if only we can convince ourselves of the greatness of our need, and of the power and the desire of our Lord to help us. If our passions are strong, our need is all the greater. If we are inclined to be afraid of what people will think and say about us, we may recognise in this beginning of fear a sign of that very weakness of will for which we are seeking a remedy, and we should be spurred to overcome ourselves in a comparatively easy matter in order that we may gain strength for the graver

crises of life. If the obstacle in our way is nothing more serious than some dislike or distrust of those who are placed over us, then we may remind ourselves that, whatever anyone may do that we in our superior judgment may happen to disapprove, no man can keep us from our Lord. If others are harsh, or unjust, or unkind, or inconsiderate, or selfish in their dealings with us, or if we imagine them to be so, here is One who cannot be harsh or unjust or unkind; here is He who died for us on the Cross, who was bruised for our iniquities and wounded for our sins, and by whose stripes we are healed, and who invites us to come to Him daily to receive at His hands the remedy which we need. Shall we hold back? Shall we be afraid? Shall we be too lazy and indolent? Or shall we allow ourselves to be kept away for no better reason than because the particular man whose business it is to convey to us His loving invitation lacks, perchance, those qualities which we should expect to find in a diligent minister of God's word and of the divine mysteries?

The greater our need, the greater our sinfulness, the greater our weakness, the more reason that we should come. And by how much the help that we get from our fellow men is more patently inadequate to meet our necessities, by so much the more should we have recourse to Him who is the sole and only source of all grace, by whatever channel it may flow into our souls.

And lastly, do not forget that the sick man in the Gospel story was brought to our Lord by his friends. This matter of frequent or daily Communion is one in which we may very greatly help one another, both

by our example and personal influence, and also by our prayers. It is worth our while to seek means whereby we may bring in others besides ourselves and lay them, as it were, at the feet of Jesus for their healing.

XXXI

THE BREAD OF THE WAYFARER*

"At that time, when there was a great multitude with Jesus, and they had nothing to eat, calling His disciples together, He saith to them: I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way, for some of them are come from afar off."—ST MARK viii. 3.

ON two distinct occasions, during the last year of His public ministry, our Lord performed the miracle of the multiplication of a few loaves and fishes for the feeding of a great crowd. There are several interesting points of difference between the two events; but for the present it may be sufficient to notice one only, viz., that which distinguishes the persons who made up the five thousand and the four thousand respectively.

In the first instance the crowd was made up of people from the towns and villages on the shores of the Lake of Tiberias, from Capharnaum and Bethsaida and Corozain and other neighbouring hamlets, who would be chiefly Jews. But the multitude on

* For the Octave of Corpus Christi.

the second occasion was of a quite different character. Our Lord, wishing not to provoke His enemies, who had begun to show their open hostility, had retired for a while from Galilee. He had gone northwards along the coast, past Tyre and Sidon, and then, striking inland, He had come round to the north-eastern shore of the lake, to the spot where a few weeks before He had worked the first of the two miracles of which mention has been made.* And those who now followed Him were from that part of the country which lay beyond Galilee, and would therefore be for the most part Gentiles. And accordingly the second multiplication of loaves and fishes, following on the first, symbolised the admission of the Gentiles, or of all the nations of the earth, to the fulness of the Gospel blessings.

This, however, does not so much concern us. What does concern us is that, as the feeding of the second multitude had for its purpose their support during the tedious and weary journey back to their homes, so the most Holy Sacrament, of which the multiplied loaves and fishes were a type, is intended to be our support during our journey through this world to our true and eternal home, which is heaven.

But there is, alas, this difference. When we are on a journey we do not need anyone to remind us of our need of bodily support. The claims of hunger make themselves felt without any external prompting. Indeed, so long as the means of satisfying them are available, they are apt to be anticipated rather than held over. But in the spiritual life, which is so immeasurably more important, it is not

* *Cf.* St Matt. xv. 21 ; St Mark vii. 24, 31.

so. We forget that our soul is hungry and needs its food. And too often the greater our need, the more complete is our forgetfulness or unconsciousness of our need. The world, instead of being a desert through which we are travelling towards our home, seems to us such a pleasant place that we should like to make our home for ever here—not here in this college, but here on this earth. And the more pleasant our circumstances are, the less we feel the need of that food which endureth unto life everlasting, which our Lord in His great mercy and love for us has provided. And that is one of the reasons why, during holiday-time, so many are apt to neglect the sacraments. Life is so agreeable during those weeks of leisure, that we lose the sense of our need of God and of His grace. And yet it is precisely at such times that we need Him most, because our distractions are so many, and our temptations, very often, so strong. And therefore it is most desirable that we should look ahead, and stiffen our backs to a good strong resolution that we will not allow our holidays to interfere with our frequentation of the sacraments. The keeping of such a resolution will of course require an effort, and may involve many a little sacrifice, and occasionally some greater sacrifice, of pleasure. But the effort and the sacrifice are more than well worth making. It is like the choice between bubbles and bank-notes. Shall we be so foolish as to prefer the bubbles? If we were so ill-advised as to make this choice, how bitter would our regrets be—and all the more bitter because then quite unavailing—when at the great and final examination which we must all undergo, we found that

we had been losing marks wholesale by such folly. How bitter then, but how vain, would be the reproaches with which we should assail those who once had the charge of us, if they had not set the truth before us in the clearest possible light.

If holidays have been mentioned, however, this has been mainly with a view to the long journey of our later lives; and because our conduct during time of vacation affords a presage of what we are likely to do after the day of our permanent emancipation has come and gone. It is then that our need will be even greater than during the few weeks that elapse between one school term and another, because we shall then no longer be able to flatter ourselves with the assurance that we shall make up for lost time on our return to the more favourable conditions of college life. Those more favourable conditions will then have passed away from us, and we shall indeed have reason to be thankful if in the days of our youth we have formed habits that will stand the wear and tear of life.

But after all it will, as has been said before, be impossible for many of us to carry out through life that practice of daily or very frequent Communion which has been our support and our joy while we lived within these walls. And unfortunately it is to be feared that this very circumstance may deter some of us from making as full a use as we might of the privilege which is at present within our easy reach. A boy may say: "What is the use of beginning, here, a custom which I shall perforce be compelled to drop as soon as I enter on the serious business of earning my living?" The objection implied in

this question is indeed a specious one; but it is one of which the fallaciousness may easily be detected. The Holy Eucharist is, in our Lord's own words, "the food which endureth unto life everlasting." Its effects are not exhausted when we have finished our thanksgiving after Holy Communion, or in the course of the day, or even of a week or a month. Indeed its chief effects can of their very nature be experienced only when we have passed through the portals of death to that true life which will have no end. It is then that we shall know and realise what each reception of our Lord's sacred Body has been to us and has done for us. It is then that we shall taste to the full the sweetness of the heavenly food which we have eaten during the course of our earthly pilgrimage.

And if this heavenly food in plain and sober truth "endureth unto life everlasting," *à fortiori* it will endure throughout our life here on earth. Even in the case of bodily food we very often hear of a premature break-down in health which is manifestly attributable, not so much to any immediately precedent cause, as to insufficient nutrition in youth or childhood. And so it might be with our spiritual health in later years, if we were to neglect in boyhood that divine nourishment which, while we are here, is daily offered to us.

Remember that our Lord knows, far better than we know ourselves, to what an extent we shall be deprived of this food, whether by unavoidable circumstances or by our own carelessness, in the years to come. And remember that it is, by divine institution and in our Lord's intention, the bread of

the wayfarer. Our Communion of to-day and of to-morrow are part of our provision for the journey of life. Surely our Blessed Lady, our dear and immaculate Mother, would wish that this provision should be, in the case of each one of us, her children, as plentiful as possible.

Of Elias we are told that, when he was fleeing from the wrath of Achab and Jezebel, after a day's journey through the desert he lay down utterly exhausted and disheartened; and that, after he had slept awhile, "an angel of the Lord touched him, and said to him: Arise and eat. And he looked, and behold there was at his head a hearth-cake and a vessel of water: and he ate and drank, and he fell asleep again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said to him: Arise, eat, for thou hast yet a great way to go. And he arose and ate and drank, and walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto Horeb, the mount of God." * The hearth-cake and the water are unquestionably a type of the Holy Eucharist, the bread of the wayfarer; and the message commanding us to "arise and eat," for that we have yet a "great way to go," comes to us with an authority no whit inferior to that of the angel who wakened the prophet.

And yet it may well be that we shall feel ourselves less powerfully moved by the type than by His words who came to fulfil all types, and to be Himself their fulfilment. "I have compassion on the multitude, for behold . . . they have nothing to eat; and if I shall send them away fasting to their

* 3 (1) Kings xix. 5-8.

home, they will faint by the way, for some of them are come from afar off." It rests with us to supplement and to second the compassion of our Lord's Sacred Heart by our own compassion on ourselves.

XXXII

THE HUNGER OF THE HEART *

"The hungry He hath filled with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away."—ST LUKE i. 53.

THE words from our Lady's canticle, *Esurientes implevit bonis,* and the rest, express a truth or principle which is of fundamental importance in the spiritual life; a truth or principle which is again and again set forth in the pages of Holy Writ, and most explicitly by our Lord Himself in the fourth Beatitude: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill." The principle is that, in order to attain to the good things of God, and of Christ Jesus our Lord, we must hunger for them. If we have no appetite for them, either we shall miss them altogether through our own neglect, or, if they touch us externally because we cannot avoid them, they will not penetrate beneath the surface of our souls.

The principle applies alike to the sacraments and to all that comes under the head of religious instruction, whether conveyed by the spoken word or by printed books. It applies first of all to sacraments,

* June 9, 1907 (third Sunday after Pentecost).

as we are reminded by the parable of the Great Supper, read in last Sunday's Mass. There the destitute and the outcast are bidden to the feast, from which the well-to-do purchaser of the country-house, and the prosperous proprietor of the oxen, turned superciliously away. Speaking quite generally, those who flock to the holy table are those who have a hunger for the heavenly food which is there set before them; while those who neglect this divine gift—unless, indeed, they are deterred by reverential fear from receiving it—are those who have no special desire for it. And similarly as regards religious instruction of whatever kind. If a man or a boy really wants to learn something about his soul, about our Lord, His doctrine, His service, and about the kingdom of heaven, he usually will not lack the means of satisfying his desire. Either he will find external sources of knowledge at his disposal, or, if these are lacking, the Holy Spirit will make good the want by His interior guidance. But if a man, or a boy, does *not* want to learn, then all the sermons that ever were preached, and all the spiritual books that ever were published, will do him little or no good. Either he will not hear the sermons or read the books, or, if he does so against his will, he will derive no great profit from them.

But you may say: "My appetite is not under my own control. I can't be hungry simply by wishing to be hungry. In point of fact I am *not* hungry for spiritual things. I was built that way, and there is no more to be said about the matter." To this I answer that when our Lord says: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they

shall have their fill," He reminds us that our appetite for spiritual things to a great extent *is* under our control. It is a matter of the will rather than of the feelings. It is not to be expected of the average man or boy that he should have a natural inclination for sermons or religious instruction of any kind. If he makes up his mind, in spite of the irksomeness of listening, at least not to neglect the word of God, and to do at least something in the way of spiritual reading, and if, moreover, he makes a genuine effort to profit by what he hears and reads, his appetite may be said to be in a normally healthy state. Some, of course, will very laudably go far beyond this; but this respectable minimum ought to be within the reach of all of us. And since the whole matter is mainly an affair of the will, it is plain that we can do much, with God's help, to improve our appetite, and that we can also, without much trouble, do a great deal to spoil it. The subject is, then, worth looking into.

Of course we are always ready enough to throw the blame on anything or anybody except ourselves. We persuade ourselves either that the food set before us is not of the right sort, or that the cooking is detestable. In other words, either the truths which we hear are unpleasant, or they are unpleasantly stated. Now in this connection let me tell you a story of a convert whom I knew intimately for many years. Before his conversion, and when he was feeling his way towards the true faith, he used to attend sometimes the Anglican and sometimes the Catholic Church in the town or village where he lived. And he noticed that, whereas the

sermons of the Anglican clergyman always left him quite satisfied with himself, those which he heard in the Catholic Church invariably made him feel uncomfortable. And turning the matter over in his mind, he arrived at the not unreasonable conclusion that the preacher who made him feel uncomfortable was, on the whole, more likely to be right than the one who seemed to deal exclusively in butter and margarine, and other oleaginous substances. This was not precisely the reason that determined him to become a Catholic, but it was one of the little indications that helped him in the right direction. And the moral is that a truth does not necessarily cease to be true or profitable because the statement of it is by the nature of the case unpleasant.

And therefore, when we find that our spiritual appetite is failing us, we shall do well to consider whether perhaps the reason may lie, not in the food or in the cooking, but in something that is amiss with our own digestive system. Now the internal causes that tend to spoil our appetite for spiritual things are reducible to two, of which the first is self-indulgence. Here is a sentence from a letter written recently by a convent schoolgirl which may serve to illustrate the subject. The writer and her companions had recently been celebrating the Reverend Mother's feast. One item in the entertainment was a very rich cake, of which the young people would seem to have eaten rather plentifully. For "next day," says the writer, who apparently favours a phonetic system of spelling, "next day we all had panes in our stumx." This is, of course, the natural result of injudicious superalimentation, of an in-

ordinate consumption of indigestible foodstuffs, or—shall we say it?—of greediness. And it would plainly be useless to offer to any one in that distressing condition the most wholesome or the most toothsome dinner that the best of cooks could prepare. Now this is, as you will understand, a parable, in which greediness may stand for any kind of unreasonable self-indulgence. By unreasonable self-indulgence we fill ourselves, so to say, with the wrong kind of food, the result being that we have no room for the right kind. If a boy were to eat half a pound of potato peelings at about twelve o'clock in the day, he certainly would have no appetite for dinner. And if we are so foolish as to gratify every inclination of our lower nature, even those which are not sinful, we are not giving the higher appetite a fair chance.

Fortunately, however, the remedy for self-indulgence, though not pleasant, has at least the merit of being very simple. The remedy for self-indulgence is self-denial. The remedy for an inordinate or excessive use of pleasant things is to learn to do without them. It is a good strong will that is wanted for this purpose, not a laboured argument. So we may pass on to consider the second great spoiler of the spiritual appetite, and that is—pride.

We talk of being "puffed up" with pride; and everyone knows that when the digestive organs are "puffed up" or inflated, the appetite suffers. But, not to press the metaphor, consider what pride really is. It is perhaps best described as being the opposite of humility, that virtue so dear to the Sacred Heart of our Lord, the one virtue which He explicitly bade

us learn from Him. Now humility consists in taking a true view of our position with relation to God and our fellow-creatures, and in acting accordingly. Humility is to know our place and to keep it. Pride is to imagine ourselves better and bigger than we really are. There is nothing unmanly in humility, and nothing manly in pride. In ordinary human affairs, when a man "puts on side," as we say, and pretends to be something more considerable than he really is, he is commonly reckoned a snob. And a proud man is just a snob in the spiritual order, and cuts a ridiculous figure in the eye of God and the angels. Plantagenet Ponsonby de Tomkyns, who would like us to believe that his ancestors came over with the Conqueror, whereas in fact they came without him, by quite another boat—Plantaganet Ponsonby de Tomkyns is a snob, and appropriately finds his place in the back numbers of *Punch.* The Pharisee in the Temple, when he thanked God that he was not as other men, and glanced superciliously over his shoulder at the Publican—who after all was saying the right kind of prayers, and telling the truth about himself, when he said "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner"—that Pharisee was in the spiritual order the worst kind of snob. And not to multiply instances, all pride is snobbery, and as such is contemptible. And pride is unquestionably an effective spoiler of the spiritual appetite. As soon as we begin to think too much of ourselves, to make ourselves forsooth the measure of everyone and everything, to weigh everyone and everything in our own particular pair of scales, it follows as a matter of course that we do not feel the same desire to learn what is for our advantage as

when we had the good sense to recognise our own ignorance and weakness. There is no getting over our Lord's words: *Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli, non intrabitis in regnum cælorum*—"Unless ye become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."* And these words hold good, not merely at the outset, but at every stage of our spiritual progress. To use yet another similitude; if I had here a great treasure enclosed in a safe, and if, although I had the key in my hand, I were to endeavour to open the safe by pushing at the door, I might push for a long time, but I should not get at the treasure. Pride is like pushing at the door of a patent safe; we only shut the door tighter against ourselves.

What, then, is the remedy? Prayer, yes. Prayer is a remedy or a necessary part of the remedy for all our spiritual maladies. But it would be to little purpose to pray that the doctor might come to our assistance in time of illness if, when he did come, we were to throw his medicines out of the window. Our humility towards God will never be what it ought to be unless, in accordance with His will, we are also humble in our dealings with our fellow men, and unless we show docility towards those who have charge of us, each in his own department.

I say, each in his own department. For, to speak once again in parables, it is neither necessary nor desirable to accept the opinion of the dancing-master on questions of Hindu mythology, or to take lessons in solar physics from the drill-sergeant. Still less is it desirable to consult the professor of Japanese as to

* St Matt. xviii. 3.

the competence of his colleague, the professor of Russian. But, leaving imaginary illustrations aside, be it enough to say that as each one of us, your elders, is, by the very fact of his appointment, bidden to do his very best for you, and to trust God for the result, so you too are bidden, by the very circumstances of your position, to do your best to profit by the work of each on your behalf, and to trust God that, if only you are humble and docile and obedient, He will "see you through," and will at least suffer you to come to no harm by doing His will.

Nisi efficiamini sicut parvali—"Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom." Rightly understood, there is nothing unworthy of a man in childlike simplicity and humility. This is not to be reckoned among those childish toys and trifles which we do well to cast aside as we approach man's estate. Rather, it is a disposition which we should by all means retain and foster to the very end of our lives. In spiritual matters, at least, we shall always be learners; and the further we advance, if we really do advance, the more clearly we shall see our own shortcomings and ignorance.

There is indeed another way to humility, more sure and also more painful than this; but it is a way that is not always open to us. St Ignatius, as has been said, showed himself, as always, a shrewd observer of human nature when he insisted that the surest way to humility is through humiliation. It is when a man has experienced some keen and bitter disappointment, some apparently disastrous failure, or when he has to bear some aching and crushing sorrow—then it is that he begins to understand in good earnest his blindness

his weakness, his helplessness, his absolute need of the divine support and help. It is then that he begins to thirst, in the words of the Psalmist, after "the strong living God." It is then that, if he is a sensible man, he thanks God with all his heart, saying again and again with the Psalmist: *Bonum mihi quia humiliasti me*—"It is good for me that thou hast humbled me"; knowing well that *any* increase in the grace of humility far outweighs the pain of any cross whatsoever that may fall to our lot.

"These things I have told you, before they come to pass," said our Lord to His disciples, "that when they come to pass you may remember that I told you."* For you the time of disappointment, of failure, of disillusionment and sorrow, has not yet come. When in later years it does come, you may recall to mind some at least of the words which you have heard here. Meanwhile *your* way to humility lies, for the present, through docility and obedience. Let us conclude with a prayer, and it shall be the prayer for the grace of humility which may be found in the Latin Missal, among the *Orationes ad diversa*, just before the Masses for the Dead.

"O God, who dost resist the proud and givest grace to the humble, grant us the virtue of true humility, whereof thine only-begotten Son showed forth in Himself a model to thy faithful; that we may never by arrogance provoke Thine indignation (*ut indignationem tuam nunquam provocemus elati*), but rather by submissiveness deserve to receive the gifts of Thy grace (*sed potius gratiæ tuae capiamus dona subjecti*); thougrh the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

* St John xiv. 29; xvi. 4.

XXXIII

THE PENITENT SINNER*

"I say to you, that . . . there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninty-nine just who need not penance."—ST LUKE xv. 7.†

THESE words of our Divine Saviour, have in all ages been full of consolation for sinners. And yet they are not, at first sight, easy of interpretation. For it would indeed be as hard as it would be strange, if our Lord were better pleased with one who after a life of sin should turn to Him in his last moments, than with one who had spent long years in His faithful service. We instinctively feel that this, at any rate, cannot be the true meaning of the text; and a closer scrutiny shows clearly enough that this is not its meaning. Without entering into a detailed examination of the question, for our present purpose it may be sufficient to observe that our Lord does not say, without qualification, that there is more joy in heaven over the repentance of one sinner than over ninty-nine just, but He says, "more than over ninty-nine just *who need not penance*" or repentance. Where are these ninety-nine just *who need not penance* to be found? Not, certainly, on this earth. There were, indeed, in our Lord's time, plenty of self-righteous Pharisees, who

* June 24, 1906 (Third Sunday after Pentecost, Feast of St John the Baptist).

† From the Gospel of the day.

vainly imagined themselves to need no penance, no change of heart, no strenuous exercise of self-denial, in order to become pleasing to God. And to these, undoubtedly, our Lord here alludes. But in fact—our Lady apart—there has never lived a just *man* who did not need either penance for sin committed, or the equivalent of penance in order to keep himself free from sin. And it would be a gross misapplication of the text if it were quoted to show the intrinsic superiority of a saint who had first been a great sinner over one who by means of a rigorous austerity had preserved his innocence, and in addition had done vicarious penance for others, like St John the Baptist, for instance, or our own special patron, St Aloysius Gonzaga.

The "just who need not penance" are—according to an ancient and probable interpretation—not men but angels; and in the words of the text our Lord conveys the consoling assurance that His Sacred human Heart is more touched and moved by the rescue of sinful man from the clutches of his spiritual enemies, than by the unclouded bliss of the angelic spirits. And His words must be understood as a reminder to the Pharisees that in their self-satisfied persuasion that they stood in no need of penance, they were in fact arrogating to themselves a condition of sinlessness which belongs to angels, not to men.

To pass, however, to a very practical application of the text, we must not overlook the circumstance that, in each of the Gospel examples of penitent sinners, the recorded repentance takes place once only. Once only does the Prodigal leave his father's house. The man who has been healed at the pool of Bethesda is

bidden to go and sin no more, lest some worse evil befall him. Magdalen, once forgiven, does not return to her former course of life. St Peter, after Jesus had looked upon him, and he had gone forth and wept bitterly, never again denied his Lord and Master. Indeed, so patent is this feature in the Gospels, that, in the early centuries of our era, the examples in question were confidently cited by those who would restrict to a single occasion the reconciliation—or at least the public reconciliation—of those who after baptism had been guilty of certain heinous offences. As there was but one baptism, even so—these rigorists argued—there could be but one opportunity for repentance in the case of grave sin committed after baptism. We know, now, that this was a grossly perverted view of the Gospel teaching. At the same time, it is clearly not without reason that the examples set before us by the Evangelists, and in our Lord's own parables, are single or singular in their character. The intention was, it would seem, to teach us that repentance ought to be thorough and not half-hearted; that—*so far as our intention and purpose is concerned*—it ought to extend to our whole future. Our dispositions ought to be such that, so far as the matter lies within the power of our will, here and now, we have done with sin once and for all, and purpose never again to offend God grievously.

This is a lesson which some of us, perchance, may urgently need; and for all of us it is well to be at least reminded from time to time of the necessity for being very seriously in earnest about our contrition and our purpose of amendment. It were a childish notion to suppose that, in order to make a good act

of contrition, it is only necessary to read some words out of a book, and perhaps even to do this in a hurried and slipshod manner. We must never allow ourselves to forget that true contrition is an affair of the heart and of the will, and not merely of the knees and of the lips; though it is also not to be forgotten that the lips and the knees have their part in helping us to acquire and to entertain the requisite interior dispositions.

Nevertheless, while we very fully and very practically recognise the need of a hearty sorrow for our sins, as a quite indispensable condition of forgiveness, we must on no account allow ourselves to be discouraged by our falls, as though these alone were a clear sign of the insufficiency of our contrition. And it is of real importance to keep this truth very clearly and constantly before our minds, viz., that the test of the sincerity—or on the other hand of the half-heartedness—of a man's repentance is to be sought and found, *not* in the rarity or frequency of his falls, but rather in his conduct *after* a fall, in his conduct during those intervening periods when he is not actually beset with temptation.

Let us look into this matter a little more closely. A man may fall, and fall, and fall again, nay, he may even fall daily, for a time, and yet be very much in earnest. His first act on returning to his right senses in the morning may be a most sincere and humble act of sorrow for the sin of the preceding day or night, and this act of sorrow may be renewed again and again during the hours that follow; his prayers may be even intense in their fervour; and he may be sedulously careful to avoid company, conversa-

tion, reading, and so forth, such as would be calculated to excite temptation. And yet, when temptation actually assaults him, it may so obscure and blot out the memory or mental impression of all his good thoughts and purposes, as to take him at a terrible disadvantage. His case is like that of the obscuration or partial obscuration, at short intervals, of some of those variable double stars which are among the most striking discoveries of recent astronomy. His good resolutions suffer a temporary eclipse; but as soon as the dark phase has passed, he is genuinely and unfeignedly sorry; and he shows the genuineness of his sorrow by taking such means as are within his reach to guard and fortify himself against the next attack. Let such a one with great confidence, and without delay, seek Him of whom it was said, as we read in to-day's Gospel: "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." * Let him, without delay, seek the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. And, as has been said before, if such a man, thus thoroughly in earnest, will persevere, while he has the opportunity, in the practice of daily Communion, and of confession as often as may be necessary to fit him for daily Communion, then his cure is only a question of time, and probably of a comparatively short time. It is under such conditions as these that daily Communion may be truly described as a panacea, a sovereign remedy against all the maladies of the soul.

But it is far otherwise with the man who even in his lucid intervals is not greatly concerned about his sins; whose acts of contrition are at best perfunctory;

* St Luke xv. 2.

whose vocal prayers—when he says any—are one long series of distractions which he makes no real effort to avoid, and to whom mental prayer is a thing unknown; who allows his senses and his imagination to roam and wander uncontrolled, and takes very little care to keep out of dangerous occasions; to whom self-denial is a mere term of copy-book morality, and not a reality of life; the sort of man who would indeed like to be delivered from his temptations and his evil habits, if our Lady and his guardian angel would manage the business for him, but who will not himself take the trouble to adopt any efficacious means to overcome them. Such a man—or such a boy—has good reason to be afraid. He is certainly not making a good fight. His attitude is not that of the faithful and loyal soldier of Christ. He is approaching perilously near to the condition of one who passively acquiesces in his slavery, and whose invisible bonds are being ever more and more tightly drawn. It is not for him to flatter himself that he is one of those on whose account there is joy before the angels of God.

Needless to say that these words of warning are not intended to discourage anyone; on the contrary, their end and purpose is that we may be stimulated everyone of us, to take up, most seriously and earnestly, the business of working out our eternal salvation, with the help of God's grace and of His sacraments, and through the process, on our part, of resolute and determined self-conquest. And here once more we may recur to the familiar example—no less heroic because it is familiar—of that model English Catholic layman the Blessed Sir Thomas More.

Whether in his earlier days he sinned grievously, we do not know. But we do know that he was grievously tempted. And we know that he did not shrink from very drastic measures in order to overcome his temptations. We have all heard of his vigils and his fasts, his hairshirt and his disciplines, of his sojourn with the Carthusians, and of his weekly retirement to the house of retreat which he had built for himself at the end of his garden at Chelsea. These things are mentioned, not as if we could all of us imitate them in detail, but because we have here so striking an instance of a disposition which in our degree we ought all to share. Here was a man of no alien race, not a cleric, not by nature a character of the perpetually "prim and proper" order, but a plain English gentleman endowed with a keen sense of humour, ever ready with a merry laugh in season and sometimes (as his enemies said) even out of season; and yet, with all his cheerfulness, in grim earnest about the one thing necessary, and unshaken in his determination to preserve at all costs the priceless gift of God's grace.

Sinner or just man, his life was the life of a penitent. And such, in our degree, must our lives be if we would give to the Sacred Heart of our Lord that joy of which He speaks in the parables of the lost sheep, and the lost groat, and the prodigal son, the first two of which are read in to-day's Gospel. If we cannot fast, we can at least put some check on our appetites by way of self-denial. If we cannot practise those other forms of penance by which More chastised his body and brought it into subjection, and which were by no means unknown to our predecessors at St

Omers, even in their schoolboy days, at least we can do something to cure ourselves of the mischievous habit of aimlessly idling and sedulously doing nothing in particular (at times when we might be engaged in some useful employment), and thus courting danger and inviting opportunities for undesirable conversation. If we cannot emulate More's protracted meditations, and his habit of occasional complete retirement, at least we can keep ourselves in mind of the eternal truths by not altogether neglecting those simple exercises of mental prayer and spiritual reading which are so particularly recommended to all Sodalists; and which are recommended to Sodalists precisely because they are suitable for all good Christians.

Do not forget the wise caution given us by Father Maturin in his admirable book on *Self-Knowledge*, that if we would wage a successful conflict with the enemies of our eternal salvation, the conflict must be not merely with temptation when it comes upon us, but with those natural inclinations of ours, the unrestrained indulgence of which, even in matters not positively sinful, leaves us open to temptation.

"There shall be joy before the angels of heaven upon one sinner doing penance." That joy, "before," or "in presence of," the angels, is the joy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And that joy we shall give Him if our repentance is sincere, our purpose of amendment firm and serious, and our practices of self-denial such as are suited to the state and condition of the penitent sinner, who desires above all things that he may never again be separated from our Lord.

XXXIV

RENUNCIATION *

"And having brought their ships to land, leaving all things, they followed Him."—ST LUKE v. 11.†

IT is told in the life of St Catherine of Siena, and the authority for the story is none other than herself, that our Lord once appeared to her in a vision, and offered her two crowns, a crown of roses and a crown of thorns, between which she was to choose. Even if we had never heard of the incident before, we should guess at once that she chose the thorns, and we should be at no loss for the reason of her choice. She wished to resemble her Divine Master as closely as possible, knowing well that to be like Him is to be near Him, and desiring this above all things. And assuredly she had her wish, for her life was a very martyrdom of suffering from extremely painful maladies, to say nothing of the mental anguish which she endured from the ingratitude of men, from bitter disappointments, from misunderstandings and undeserved reproaches.

Shall we say that she chose unwisely? Is there

* July 1, 1906 (Fourth Sunday after Pentecost).

† From the Gospel of the day.

one of us who would have ventured to suggest to her the craven counsel of an easier choice? We can all understand that, although, had she preferred the crown of roses, she would have committed no sin, since these too were offered her by our Lord Himself, yet by that preference she would have forfeited quite inestimable treasures of grace. We can all understand that, had she elected to tread the more obvious path of comparative comfort, she would have missed that power over souls which she possessed in so extraordinary a degree, and which is the peculiar privilege of those who earn it by the courageous endurance of suffering.

This, at least in a vague sort of way, we all comprehend; and perhaps a good many of us rather easily take for granted that our choice would have been like hers. And so, most probably, it would have been, had we been favoured with a vision of our Saviour in person, and had the offer been made to us in set terms. That contingency, however, may—so far as we are concerned—be put out of account. And the vision, for us, may be taken as a parable of the opportunities for making some deliberate choice that from time to time are put in our way by the circumstances of life, which are, for us, the expression of God's providence in our regard. Before all of us, whether we advert to the fact or no, it happens from time to time that the thorns and the roses are laid, that we may choose between them. But, so far from following the example of St Catherine, the great majority of men, nay even of Christians, choose the roses simply as a matter of course. It does not even occur to them to do otherwise. They are so accustomed to follow

the line of least resistance, at least in things that are not sinful, that when a windfall of good fortune drops at their feet, they pick it up and carry it off without more ado, very probably forgetting even to thank God for it, and altogether overlooking the possibility that renunciation rather than acquisition may be the better and the wiser course. For this is the form in which the thorns and the roses are most commonly offered us, viz., in the form of a choice between taking and leaving something which is agreeable to our natural inclinations.

Now, to-day's Gospel sets before us a very striking example which should serve to remind us that to pocket a windfall—or to turn every bit of good fortune to our immediate temporal advantage—is not always the best and wisest thing that we can do. Looked at from a purely human and business standpoint, the miraculous draught of fishes was certainly a very considerable windfall for the allied firms of Zebedee and Sons, and Simon, Andrew and Co. Moreover, this windfall had come to them by a manifest and very direct interposition of Providence. And yet the record ends with the statement, not that they made enough by the sale of the fish to provide themselves with a set of new nets (for their old ones, as we know, were sadly in need of mending), but on the contrary that Simon and Andrew, James and John left fish, and nets, and boats, and all that they had, to follow our Lord. Nor can we doubt that the call to leave their wonderful catch was a boon of a far higher order than a clear gift of all the fish that could have found a market in Palestine.

And so it ever has been, and is, and ever will be,

that in this life renunciation is, *ceteris paribus*, better than acquisition, that it is "more blessed to give than to receive,"* and that the wise man, instead of coveting the good things of this life that are out of his reach, will habitually ask himself—as regards those things that are within his reach—"Can I do without it?" That is to say, can I do without it consistently with God's better service? For if I can, then there will always be a hundred purposes to which it may be more profitably devoted than to my own comfort and convenience; and even were those purposes not evident, it would still be the more perfect thing to choose as Christ chose, that we may the more closely resemble Him.

"If thou wilt be perfect," said our Lord to the young man in the Gospel, "go sell all thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow Me."† This is the highest perfection, and it is not within the reach of all. Men differ in their spiritual no less than in their intellectual capacities; and they differ in their spiritual capacities far more widely than, for instance, the musical instruments of an orchestra differ among themselves. It is presumably possible to play the ophicleide, or the trombone, or even the triangle, with great perfection, that is to say in a manner precisely suited and proportioned to the capabilities of these several instruments. But it is evident that you cannot play a sonata of Beethoven on the bassoon; and that instrument is considered to have performed its part when it has buzzed its modest bass in due subordination to the rest of the orchestra.

Now, just as in the case of musical instruments, so

* Acts xx. 35. † St Matt. xix. 21.

in the case of men, a certain perfection, relative to his capabilities, is within the reach of every one, and it is God's will that he should set himself to its attainment. And as on the one hand the neglect of God's will is sheer foolishness, so on the other hand to make God's will our rule of life and conduct is the merest common sense.

And now we may draw this further conclusion, that as the renunciation of all things for Christ our Lord's sake is the highest kind of perfection, even so some measure of renunciation is necessary for the attainment of those lower and relative kinds of perfection which are within the reach of all of us. We are all of us without exception called on to give up many things which we should like to do and to have, and to do many things which we should prefer to leave undone. We are not for the most part called upon to sell all that we have and give to the poor that we may follow Christ; but we are all called upon to do something in the way of almsgiving, and to do it at some cost to ourselves.

Now, as regards the direction which our almsgiving should take, bear in mind the sound principle that charity begins at home, but that it does not stay at home. We all of us have in the first place our duties of private and personal kindness and consideration to the members of our own family, and to those with whom for the time being we may happen to live, whether they be our superiors and elders, or our equals and companions, or dependents and servants. And we have our duty of almsgiving in the first instance to the charities of our own diocese, which are recommended to us by the Bishop, who is our

ecclesiastical superior. Nor can any amount of extraneous benevolence, however laudable in itself, exempt us from these primary claims. This we shall the more readily acknowledge, if we bear in mind that the only diocesan charity to which we are ordinarily invited to contribute is one that to us, as boys, should appeal with a very special force. By our support of the Protection and Rescue Society, we are helping to secure the blessings of a Catholic education for those whose lot in life is less fortunate than our own, the orphan and destitute children of our great towns.

So much, then, for the charity which begins at home. But charity, as has been said, does not stay at home. "The word Catholic means universal"—so our Catechism reminds us—and to be a Catholic is to be a member of a world-wide and age-long Church. Nor are we in the fullest sense true to our name and profession, unless we take some kind of active interest in the work of the Church in lands remote from our own. Within our own country it is fitting that we should give the first place to the needs, spiritual and temporal, of our own neighbourhood and diocese, for to do this is to respect the divine will as indicated to us by our position in the highly organised system of the hierarchical Church. But as regards the lands which lie outside our borders, since we cannot judge for ourselves of their comparative necessities, and since circumstances for the most part do not point unmistakably in one direction rather than in another, the wisest course is to leave the distribution of our alms to the discretion of some responsible body, such as the Association

for the Propagation of the Faith, which—as we know—has the charge of supporting missions to the heathen all over the world. It has been well and very truly said, that the "Annals of the Propagation of the Faith" may be regarded as adding ever new chapters to the Acts of the Apostles. And, as we have been repeatedly reminded in these Annals, England, with its vast empire and its heavy responsibilities, might well be expected to support with great generosity this noble work of the foreign missions. And yet, as we learn from the current number of this excellent periodical, the single diocese of Boston in the United States, with a Catholic population less than half that of England, contributed, during the year 1905, just six times as much as the whole of our own country.

It is by remembering great works of charity at home, and not forgetting those whose beneficient influence extends to regions the most remote, that we shall bear our part—the part which our Lord would wish us to bear—in carrying out that divine precept which was addressed in the first instance to the Apostles: "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; and for the carrying out of which they left all their possessions and all their earthly prospects.

XXXV

PERFECTION, HOLINESS, AND THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS*

'Be ye therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect."—ST MATT. v. 48.

WE keep to-day the feast of St John Francis Regis, one of the great missionary saints of the Society of Jesus, and one who, though chiefly distinguished for the labours of his later life, had already attained to very remarkable holiness while he was still quite young. And within this present week we shall be celebrating the festival of our holy patron St Aloysius Gonzaga. And we may take occasion from these two feasts to consider further the subject of perfection and holiness, with special reference to the example of the saints, and our imitation of them.

Next to pride—which is an easy winner in the competition for a bad pre-eminence among human failings—next to pride, the worst obstacle to spiritual progress is, perhaps, discouragement. And a most insidious form of discouragement is acquiescence in a kind of half-conscious persuasion or tacit agree-

* June 16, 1907 (Feast of St John Francis Regis, S.J.).

ment that the days of holiness are past; or that holiness is a kind of exotic growth not suited to our climate, or to our national character; or at any rate that it is not attainable in boyhood, or in an English public school. That is a pestilent notion, a notion no less pestilent than the idea, now happily exploded, that daily Communion is not good for schoolboys. It is a notion which deserves to be combated and protested against, by those who are responsible for our welfare, with all possible vigour and earnestness. The arm of the Lord is not shortened. Holiness is no more out of reach in the twentieth century than it was in the sixteenth or seventeenth. And it is no more out of the reach of boys in England, or at Stonyhurst, than it was out of the reach of boys in Italy, or Spain, or Poland, or Austria, or Belgium, or France, in the days of Aloysius Gonzaga, or Stanislas Kostka, or John Berchmans, or John Francis Regis. It is a mistake, a mischievous and discouraging mistake, a mistake mischievous because it is so discouraging, to think of the saints as though they were a class of beings apart, between whom and ourselves there is a great gulf fixed. Again and again let us remind ourselves that Aloysius, Stanislas, and Berchmans were only three among thousands, literally thousands, who in successive centuries and in various countries have attained to holiness in boyhood. And why not we? Why not some, at least, of us?

It is true that the difficulties against which we have to contend differ in some respects from those which they experienced. Many of them were exposed, even from childhood, to the contamina-

ting contact of open and unabashed wickedness; a contact from which we, thank God, have been mercifully preserved. But on the other hand the fire of charity and the flame of generosity in our hearts has to struggle and contend against that depressing wet blanket, of distinctively modern manufacture, which is woven of the thousand influences that in our days make for mediocrity. The growth of a healthy individualism, of the conviction that my soul is my own most precious possession, whose capacities it is for me, with God's help, to develop and bring to perfection, is too often checked by the unperceived tyranny of public opinion. The sense of individual responsibility to God, and the corresponding sense of personal indebtedness to Christ our Lord, is too often all but stifled by the vain and foolish delusion (almost too foolish to find expression in words) that the one thing necessary is to be just like everybody else, to follow the fashion, and, so far as virtue is concerned, to rest content if we do not visibly fall below the highly respectable average of those around us.

That is not the teaching of the Gospel, which takes no account of averages except to urge us to rise above them. "Unless your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees" (which was the highly respectable average of those days), "you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." *Noune et ethnici hoc faciunt?*—"Do not even the heathen do these things?" asks our Lord, when speaking of acts of ordinary natural virtue, and urging His followers to aim at something higher and better. The Gospel tells us of five talents entrusted to one, and two to

another, and one to a third. And it thereby reminds us that we shall be judged, not by comparison with what our neighbour has done, who perhaps had fewer advantages than we, but by the use we have made of the chances that were ours; of the knowledge which was ours or which we might easily have acquired; of the movements of divine grace which stirred our will but which we, perhaps, were too cowardly to act upon; of the advice and exhortations which would have guided and strengthened our resolves, if we had not been too careless or perchance too self-conceited to listen to them or to take them to heart.

"Knowledge," says Father Rickaby, on the opening page of his latest book—"Knowledge is a call to action: an insight into the way of perfection is a call to perfection." And a firm grip of the truth thus expressed would assuredly save us many mistakes in the spiritual life. It would put us on our guard against judging others, whose insight into the truths of faith may, through no fault of theirs, be less keen than our own; and it would also serve to warn us against measuring ourselves, to our own self-satisfaction and thereby to our own mischief, by what we see, or think that we see, in the conduct of our neighbour. The only sensible and manly rule of conduct for each one of us is that which is expressed in our college motto: *Quant je puis;* that is to say, my aim should be to do for our Lord, not as much as this one does, or as that other might fairly be expected to do, but as much as, with God's help, I individually can. "Lord, what of this man?" asked St Peter concerning his fellow-Apostle St John. And the

answer was brief and to the point: "What is that to thee? Follow thou Me."*

And now, lest we should be frightened, or even repelled, by the idea of perfection, and still more, perhaps, by that of holiness, let us try to put before ourselves, as clearly as we can, the plain common sense of the matter. The words: "Be ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," were addressed by our Lord to the crowd; and it is unquestionably true that, according to a right understanding of the word, every Christian is called to perfection. But then, lest this should seem an impossible ideal, it is necessary to bear in mind that "perfection" is of its nature a relative term. And here it may be useful to develop an illustration of which we have already had occasion to make use. Take the instruments in an orchestra. Plainly there is a kind of perfection of which each is capable; but it is equally plain that the perfection of one differs greatly from the perfection of another. An ideally perfect bassoon, operated by the most accomplished of bassoonists, could not possibly produce the notes of a violin; still less is it capable of the rich variety and harmonious combinations of sounds which are proper to the organ. Each instrument may be perfect in its kind; but the perfection of organ-playing is manifestly of a different order from the perfect manipulation, say, of the triangle or the tambourine. Now it may be that some of us, not being highly gifted, must be content to play the bassoon, or possibly even the triangle or the tambourine, in the great orchestra of life. But everyone, without exception, is called on to do his best; and

* St John xxi. 21, 22.

the man, or the boy, who really does his best in the service of God is in process of attaining to perfection, the perfection proper to himself. But it must be *his* best, not some one else's best, who may have had fewer chances or lesser gifts than his. We should not deem an organist perfect in his art because he contrived to extract from his capacious and comprehensive instrument a mere succession of single notes, one at a time, such as might do credit to his neighbour who plays the trombone.

So much, then, for "perfection"; but what about "holiness"? Holiness, in the stricter sense, is perfection of a higher order, analogous, in the similitude, to the playing of the organ. It is not within the reach of everyone. But it is within the reach of the few, as the lives of the saints, canonised and uncanonised, assure us. And as we are proud, and rightly proud, of those among our number who achieve distinction in any department of school life, whether athletic or academic; as we are still more proud, and rightly proud, of those past students of the college who have done honour to their bringing-up by deeds of heroism or by well-earned success in their various professions; so we ought to desire with all our hearts that some of us at least may attain to the highest distinction of all, the one kind of distinction of which the record and the reward are alike imperishable, and of which we shall be proud for all eternity, the distinction of personal holiness, and of those eminently valuable services to God and his fellow men which personal holiness alone qualifies a man to render.

Nor is it unprofitable even for the least fervent among us to know something of the way in which

holiness is to be attained by those who have the capacity for it. And, in particular, it is not unprofitable to ask ourselves what is the use which all of us, the few and the many alike, should make of the example of the saints.

Let it be admitted, forthwith, that in very many matters it is impossible for us to do, and that it would be undesirable for us to attempt to do, the particular things that the saints did. But the reason of this is not, simply, that they were saints and we are not, for that would be to set up that imaginary barrier between them and ourselves the supposed existence of which is so discouraging. The reason, or a considerable part of the reason, is that the outward circumstances of our lives differ so widely from those of almost any saint in the calendar. If the circumstances of our boyhood were similar to those of the boyhood of St Aloysius, then indeed some of us might very profitably attempt to do many of the things which he did when he was no older than we are, as we may hereafter have occasion to consider more at large. Or, to take another instance already familiar to you, if we had the opportunity which St Peter Claver had of conversing daily with one who was himself a saint, some of us at least might well imitate, so far as our duties allowed, the humility, and the eager desire to advance in God's service, which prompted the future apostle of the negroes so assiduously to seek the counsel of St Alphonsus Rodriguez. But we have not this opportunity; and the sensible view of the matter would seem to be, not that we are less in need of counsel and instruction and encouragement than Claver was, or that what he did in this

matter was in itself too heroic for any of us to attempt, but simply that his circumstances were not ours, and that in this respect at least he was more favourably situated than ourselves. If we had his chances, please God we should avail ourselves of them. As things are, we can only imitate him by making the best use we can of such minor helps in the way of spiritual counsel as are within our reach.

The right way to imitate the saints is, then, not slavishly to copy their actions in detail, but most sedulously to cultivate the dispositions which were the groundwork of their sanctity, and resolutely to make our own their principles of conduct. The principles are the same for all, the application of the principles must differ according to our circumstances and capacities.

Looking, then, to fundamental dispositions and dominant principles of action, rather than to details of conduct, it is safe to say that the saints became what they were, not by striving to be as nearly as possible like everybody else, but by striving to be as nearly as possible like our Lord. They became saints by the persevering exercise of unbounded generosity and unbounded confidence. They became saints, not by confining their efforts within the strict limits of duty, but by expanding and extending them to the very utmost of what they were able to do and to endure for their Divine Master. And if we are foolish enough to adopt any other rule of life than this, sooner or later we shall bitterly rue our folly; whether, by God's mercy, while there is still time to recover lost ground, or perchance when it is too late

to repair the mischief wrought by our perversity, our self-indulgence and our self-sufficiency.

And now there are certain considerations which deserve the very special attention of those among us who may feel ourselves, or have felt ourselves, called to higher things. If, through faint-heartedness, through lack of generosity or of confidence, we deliberately refrain from aiming at the perfection to which God calls us, we do not indeed thereby commit a sin, but we do expose ourselves to the danger of falling very far below the more moderate or middling standard which in our waywardness and wilfulness we have substituted for the higher ideal which God in His great mercy had set before us. If we deliberately renounce the higher ideal, we may fail to attain even to the lower.

Again, beware of postponing your response to God's call, whether it be a call to some particular act of virtue, or to a complete change of life such as St Peter's when at a word from Jesus he left his boat and his nets to follow him.* Remember that "there is no time like the present," and that *bis dat qui cito dat*—"He giveth twice who giveth at once." Every call of grace is like a delicate and tender plant which requires constant care. If such a plant were consigned to you by rail, and you were to say: "Let it wait in the backyard, I'll attend to it in a week or so"; in a week or so you would find that in the meanwhile it had died for want of being attended to in time. If the graces of to-day are neglected, you cannot promise yourself that you will find them waiting for you to-morrow. And now let us make

* St Luke v. 11.

a special application of this point. There are a certain number of us, a few at least in each class from the highest to the lowest, who have it in mind to devote ourselves to God's service in the priesthood or the religious life. Now to those who have this noble end in view, every wise director or adviser would say: Do not put off your more fervent service of God, the practice of habitual prayer and self-denial, the pursuit of perfection, till you find yourselves safe within the walls of a Bishop's seminary or of the noviciate of a religious order. In such institutions it is in a manner the fashion to be fervent. But the kind of fervour that does not show itself till fervour is in fashion, is apt to be of the kind that will not stand the stress and strain of daily life in later years. Moreover, not only is it true that, in the course of the Christian centuries, many thousands have attained to holiness in boyhood, but we shall find, on inquiry, that those of the saints whose boyhood was passed, like ours, under favourable conditions (which was by no means the case with all of them), did in fact give promise of their future sanctity from their earliest years. So may it be with you.

Let us conclude with the collect of St Stanislas Kostka, as most in harmony with the thoughts that have been last expressed: "O God, who among the other marvels of Thy wisdom hast even in tender years conferred the gift of matured sanctity, grant that, after the example of Blessed Stanislas, we may redeem the time by earnest labour, and hasten to enter into eternal rest. Amen."

XXXVI

ST ALOYSIUS OUR MODEL AND OUR PATRON *

"And Wisdom set him a hard fight, that he might overcome." —WISD. x. 12.

SOMETHING was said last Sunday on the subject of perfection, holiness, and the imitation of the saints. This morning we may appropriately consider the same subject with special reference to the life of our holy patron St Aloysius. There are three points, among others, in the record of that truly wonderful life, on which special emphasis is laid in the Mass and Office of the Saint, and which may suitably claim our attention just now, viz., his prayer, his penance, and his purity. And they may fitly be enumerated in this order, because it was his fervour in prayer that stimulated him to his exercises of penance, and his prayer and his penance combined were the safeguards of his purity.

It has been already said that the way to profit by the example of a saint is not to attempt, without discrimination, to do precisely the things that he did, but

* June 23, 1907 (Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, within the Octave of St Aloysius).

diligently to cultivate the dispositions which led him to do them. This statement, however, needs to be supplemented by the observation that even where the imitation of some particular action or practice is impossible, the record or remembrance of the action or practice may yet be full of instruction, as affording an indication of the dispositions which inspired it. The principle and the supplementary reflection alike find an apt illustration in what is perhaps the most striking among all the facts which have been recorded concerning our holy patron's exercises of prayer. We are told that when, as a mere boy of fourteen or fifteen, he was living as a page of honour in the Spanish court at Madrid, he determined to acquire the power of praying or meditating for an hour without a distraction. And this resolution he carried into effect by means of the simple but drastic method of beginning his meditation over again as often as he found that his mind had been invaded by thoughts of secular affairs. And we can hardly be surprised that, under the stress of such a self-imposed sanction, he should, with God's help, have succeeded in his endeavour. Now, an endeavour like this is plainly out of the reach even of the most fervent among ourselves. Not (let me repeat) merely or mainly because Aloysius was a saint and we are not; for saints do not come into existence ready-made, and it is at least as true to say that the effort makes the saint as that the saint makes the effort; but—if for no other reason—because our circumstances are so different from his. If we, like St Aloysius at the age of fifteen, were living at our ease in a royal palace, with no very onerous duties, and consequently with plenty of time on our hands,

it is within the bounds of possibility that some few of us might not unreasonably attempt something like what he, at our own age, not only attempted but actually carried out. And on the other hand we may take it as certain that, if St Aloysius had lived as a boy at Stonyhurst in the twentieth century, he would not have made the attempt; and this for the very simple and sufficient reason that his time would have been fully occupied with a round of duties which he would have found to be incompatible with that particular kind of effort. But we may take it as no less certain that his prayers at Stonyhurst would have been actuated by the same indomitable strength of will, by the same resolute and generous determination to do his very best—his own best, not a mere conventional or average best—under the circumstances in which he found himself, which characterised his prayers at Madrid. It is this indomitable strength of will, this resolute and generous determination to stick at nothing, to shirk no toil and to shrink from no sacrifice in the service of God, that in the life of St Aloysius compels our admiration and invites our imitation. It would be a mistake to think of St Aloysius as though he had owed his sanctity exclusively or chiefly to the great gifts with which he was endowed; or, again, to imagine him as having lived in an atmosphere of divine consolation which made everything sweet and easy for him; and to forget the indefatigable labour, and the hard fight in the struggle for self-conquest, by means of which he attained, with the assistance of God's grace, to the heights of holiness.

And now it may be not unprofitable to form for ourselves some kind of conjecture as to what St

Aloysius would have been likely to do and to attempt, in the matter of prayer, had he been one of ourselves, a Stonyhurst boy, living at this present time, under the necessity, like ourselves, of studying for competitive examinations, and of taking his part in the common life of the school. A few particulars at least may be specified as beyond all doubt or question.

Assuming, in the first place, that he would have made a point of answering, audibly and distinctly, and without gabbling the words, at all public prayers, we may be sure that, besides this, he would have been one of those who laudably exert themselves to come promptly to the chapel when the signal for prayer has been given. If he could not devote long hours to prayer, he would at least have been eager to secure such briefer periods of time as might be at his disposal for the purpose. And therefore he would, moreover, have been one of those who contrive to find or to make time for many a passing visit to the Blessed Sacrament or to our Lady's statue; and he would have turned to the best possible account such occasions and opportunities for the practice of voluntary and private devotion. Again, we cannot doubt that he would have been extremely careful to exclude all avoidable causes of distraction by a vigilant guard over his eyes, both in the chapel and elsewhere; never raising them, in time of prayer, but to the altar or the crucifix or some holy picture, and at other times keeping them under strict control—*ne vanitates hauriant*, as the Church sings, that is to say, lest they should wittingly or unwittingly gather material for the feeding and fostering of an unruly imagination. But it may also be safely taken for granted that,

after such precautionary measures, he would have been far less solicitous about the mere avoidance of distractions than about filling up the time of prayer with intensely fervent acts of faith and hope and love, of praise and of thankfulness, of petition for graces, and of contrition for his faults. He would have understood very well that the best defence against irrelevant thoughts is to be thoroughly well occupied, and that it is the intention of the will, far more than the attention of the mind, to which God looks.

Moreover, there is one practice which he would certainly have brought with him from his Italian home, or from the Spanish court, a practice which is as possible in England and at Stonyhurst as it was possible at Castiglione, or Milan, or Madrid; and that is the practice of union with God throughout the day, the practice of filling with prayer all those otherwise vacant moments which elapse between one occupation and another. And if anyone had told him that such an effort must needs overtax the brain, he would doubtless have replied that to him this kind of interim prayer, as we may call it, instead of being an irksome task, was a comfort, a solace, a rest, and a support. And here, assuredly, we need not fear any evil results from an attempt to imitate him as nearly as we can. If indeed our vacant intervals were long; if we were to spend any considerable portion of the day in doing nothing in particular; then indeed the effort to fill these waste tracts of time with prayer might well lead to mental overstrain. But if we are careful that every half hour of our day shall have its legitimate employment, and at the same time careful to allow ourselves a sufficiency

of fresh air and exercise: if our vacant intervals are no longer than those which are spent in going from place to place or in passing from one duty to another; then we need be under no apprehension that mental overstrain will be the result of turning the mind and heart to God as often as we are free to do so. It is an art which is not learned in a day; but it is an art which can be acquired, in course of time, by those who are minded to make the necessary effort; and it is an art which, when acquired, will be found to be of priceless value. And the way to begin, if we have not already made a beginning, is in the first place to school ourselves to turn the mind at once to God, even if it were only for a moment, immediately on the conclusion of each duty, whether of work or of play; and secondly, to take care that these interim prayers of ours be as cheerful and thankful and hopeful as we can make them, so that they may be as little burdensome as possible. And if, having achieved this first start, we will but persevere, our moments of interim prayer will increase by degrees both in duration and in frequency, and we shall learn to make our ejaculations with an ever greater intensity of fervour. This topic may well be commended to the very serious consideration of those among us, more especially, who may feel ourselves called to the priesthood or the religious life. It is not too soon to begin even in boyhood the cultivation of that habit of familiar converse with God without which the life of a priest, with its heavy responsibilities and its many sorrows and disappointments, would be an almost intolerable burden.

To pass now, to our second point, it is plain that

any estimate of St Aloysius would be altogether inadequate, which did not take account of the severity of his penance. It is equally plain that the circumstances of our lives at present prevent us from following his example, even if we had the requisite bodily strength, as regards the details of his austerities. At the same time it would be a great mistake to suppose that corporal penances of the kind that he practised belong to a bygone age and are altogether obsolete, or that they are proper only to persons consecrated to God by the vows of the religious life.

Anyone who is at all closely acquainted with the working of our sodalities on the continent must know of scores of men living in our own time, who as mere boys practised precisely the same kind of austerities as St Aloysius; and it would be easy to mention the names of distinguished laymen, also of our own time, and some of them our own countrymen, who, like Sir Thomas More in the sixteenth century, have persevered in such penitential exercises throughout their lives; and this, not only without detriment to their cheerfulness, but very much to its enhancement. Nor again is it to be supposed, as some vainly imagine, that such austerities are useless or purposeless. They are the means by which the saints, and innumerable persons whose virtue has fallen far short of sanctity, have tamed their evil passions, have made reparation for sin, have kept alive an ardent devotion to the sacred Passion of our Lord whose sufferings they desired to share, and have stirred and stimulated, sometimes (as in the case of Claver) to the highest pitch of heroism, their zeal for souls.

Whatever our circumstances may be, either now or in later years, we shall do well to remember that St Paul's words: *Castigo corpus meum et in servitutem redigo*—"I chastise my body and bring it into subjection," have lost none of their force; and that the motives for the practice of penance in some form or other are as strong to-day as they ever were. But now, assuming that in this department of the spiritual life we, under present circumstances, cannot follow in detail the example of St Aloysius, what can we do? The principle is the same for us as for him, and the principle is, to do what we can: *Quant je puis.* The principle is uncompromising; its application may have to be necessarily very gentle, whether by reason of physical weakness, or of the special conditions of our life, or of our want of courage and generosity. Plainly the question as to what he can do in the way of self-denial or penance, is meaningless for any one who is not very thoroughly in earnest in his service of God. And in the case of those who are thoroughly in earnest it is a question which each one must answer for himself, with such help and advice from his confessor as he may care to seek or to accept. But this much may be said in general. No boy's health ever suffered from unduly or imprudently limiting his consumption of cigarettes, or caramels, or chocolate creams. No one ever caught the "flue," or the measles, or the mumps, as a result of keeping silence in the study-place, the schoolroom, the refectory, or the dormitory; or of abstaining from idle and mischievous gossip—as distinguished from reasonably recreative conversation—elsewhere; or again from the avoidance of slouch-

ing and lounging and self-indulgent postures and attitudes, such as those which in one of the greatest of our English public schools attracted, not long since, the unwelcome attention of a high military authority. Without, however, going further in the enumeration of possible applications of the principle, be it enough to say that any practice of self-denial which does not affect health, or hinder prayer or study, is good and acceptable to God, and may serve—as far as it goes—as our way of imitating the penance of St Aloysius. It may be a small thing in itself; but so long as it is as much as we can do, the principle that regulates our penance will be the same that prompted his.

And now a few words must be said of the spotless purity of St Aloysius. It was his happy privilege not only to have been preserved from any deliberate sin of uncleanness in thought, or word, or action, but never, as it would seem, to have been disturbed by that rebellion of the animal passions which, though not in itself sinful, is yet so full of danger. A marvellous privilege indeed; but it was a privilege for which he paid a price; and it was, moreover, a privilege by no means peculiar to himself, but one which many have shared with him who have been willing to pay, in proportion to their capacities and opportunities, the same price. The virtue of holy purity, in the high perfection to which he carried it, was as a fair flower watered with those tears of contrition which throughout his life he so abundantly shed for the faults and failings of his childhood, warmed by the sunshine of that divine presence in which he so continually lived, and fenced round,

as it were, by the prickly hedge of his severe and unsparing austerity. But even prayer and penance would have been inadequate for his purpose had they not been supplemented by that most strict and vigilant guard over his senses to which some reference has already been made. And indeed it was well that our attention should be drawn to this subject. Purity is so delicate a virtue—a virtue whose lustre is as easily and as fatally tarnished as a white satin robe by grease-spots—that we cannot expect to preserve it unsullied unless we put a strong curb upon our eyes and ears and tongue. This is a matter in which there is abundant room for the exercise of that sturdy strength of will which is the backbone of character. And a high degree of very real though silent heroism may be involved in the carrying out of a firm determination so to guard our senses as to avoid not only sin, but all that could remotely be to us an occasion of sin or of temptation. Our self-restraint in this respect may be far more precious in God's sight than any other form of self-denial or penance; and we need have no fear whatsoever that it will injure our health or undermine our constitution. In this direction we surely need not be in the least afraid of going too far in the imitation of our holy patron.

And that we may have strength and courage to do this: *Sursum corda!* "Lift up your hearts"; lift them up to high and noble thoughts and aims and aspirations; keep these high thoughts and aims constantly before your minds in the midst of the petty details of daily life; and little by little you will become filled with a disgust for all manner of

mean and unclean and soul-clogging and soul-defiling trifles.

Let us conclude with the collect of the Saint's Mass, a prayer which we shall do well to have often on our lips, especially at this season: "O God, the distributor of heavenly gifts, who didst join in the angelical youth Aloysius a wonderful innocence of life with an equal severity of penance, grant, through his merits and prayers, that we who have not followed the example of his innocence may imitate him in his penance. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

XXXVII

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD *

"He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by His stripes we are healed."—ISA. liii. 5.

WE are celebrating, to-day, the Feast of our Lord's Precious Blood; and it is an occasion on which we may well stir ourselves up to a more unstinted generosity than we have hitherto shown to that Divine Lord and Master who, in the act and circumstances of the shedding of His blood, has shown such an unstinted generosity to us. I say, in the act and circumstances of His blood-shedding, or rather of His many blood-sheddings, for in His agony at Gethsemani, in the scourging at the pillar, in the crowning with thorns, in the Way of the Cross, and in the Crucifixion itself, He endured on our behalf the very extremity of pain. And then, in the abundance of His tender and munificent mercy, He would have it that after His death His sacred side should be pierced, so that even that last cleansing stream that flowed from His wounded Heart might

* July 7, 1907 (Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, Feast of the Precious Blood).

not be wanting to the completeness of the outpouring of Himself for our love.

But, of all His blood-sheddings, the one which most strongly affects the imagination, and one which ought to touch even the hardest heart, is the scourging at the pillar. A scourging, as inflicted by the Roman soldiery, was a punishment of quite abominable cruelty. The Jews, according to the humane ordinance of the Mosaic law, limited the number of strokes that could be inflicted on a criminal to forty, or, in practice, to thirty-nine; and moreover, the use of any barbarous instrument of flagellation was most strictly prohibited. But the Roman scourgings had no limit to the number of blows inflicted, a party of men were told off to relieve one another in the work of torture; in fact a "cohort" of soldiers is mentioned in connection with our Lord's scourging; and, as we know from a variety of sources, the instruments used were of the most savage kind. They were furnished either with jagged bits of iron or with lumps of lead, and they not only broke through the skin at the first application, but tore away the flesh, often down to the bone; so that it was no uncommon thing for a criminal to die under the lash or as the direct result of this terrible infliction.

Such was the punishment which our dearest Lord and Saviour endured for my sins and for yours. "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Now, the point to which we may direct our attention more particularly at present is this; that, according to the

common teaching of Catholic writers on the subject, our Lord, in enduring these cruel stripes and wounds, was on the one hand in a special manner paying the penalty for sins of the flesh, and on the other hand purchasing for us the grace, and supplying us with a motive, for resisting temptations against the holy virtue of purity. And there is probably no subject of meditation or contemplation that has more powerfully moved generations of Christians, or that should more powerfully move ourselves, to hold impurity in horror, than the scourging of our Lord at the pillar.

The kind of sin to which reference is here made affords indeed an extremely unwelcome topic of discourse, and one on which a preacher might well wish to be silent. But it is a topic on which from time to time it is a duty to touch. And it cannot be touched upon with less of danger than in close connection with the saving Passion of Christ. The sin in question is one of which we should have, as all good Catholics have, a downright hatred and detestation. It is a sin against the very first beginnings of which we should at all costs be on our guard. It is a sin concerning which there should be no parley with the tempter. It is a sin with regard to which, or the approaches to it, there should be no compromise. The moment we begin to yield, to yield in principle or in practice, the moment we begin to delude ourselves by saying: "I will go so far, but no further"; we are taking our stand, or trying to take our stand, on very slippery ground, on a most perilous incline; and we must not be surprised if we should fall, or if having fallen we should find it extremely difficult to regain a firm footing. O you that are yet

innocent, make up your minds that with the help of God's grace and our Lady's intercession, in this matter there shall be, as has been said, no compromise. And be it added that, for the keeping of this resolution, you can have no better means, external to yourselves, than that of daily Communion. How many of us would have been saved from ever offending God by serious sin had this boon of daily Communion been within our reach from the outset of our years of discretion?

But to return to the subject of our own self-protection. Remember that any deliberate indulgence in impure or sensual pleasure is grievously sinful. And remember too that, as you may see by the context in the fifth chapter of St Matthew (verses 27 ff.), it is with reference to sins of impurity that our Lord uttered those terribly strong words: "If thy right eye scandalise thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee"; not meaning, of course, that such a necessity can ever arise in fact, but signifying that if no other alternative were possible, it were better to be blind and saved than with our eyes open to be cast into hell. The passage which has been partly quoted and partly paraphrased, follows immediately on those other words in which Jesus had said that to look upon another with evil desire is to commit sin in the heart; and nothing that has ever been spoken by a preacher or printed in a spiritual book can go beyond them in the uncompromising enunciation of a plain truth. "Death hath entered in by our windows," says the prophet Jeremiah;* and of how

* Jer. ix. 21. The reference in the text is to a plague of locusts.

many men in the world's history has it been true that the beginnings of great and grievous temptation, leading to great and grievous sin, were to be traced to an unchecked curiosity and the unguarded use of the eyes, whether in the way of dangerous reading or in some other fashion? And precisely the same is to be said of the ears and of the tongue. In a word, we cannot be too sedulously on our guard.

And here let us once more take a lesson from the example of our holy patron, St Aloysius. We may sometimes, perhaps, have felt inclined to regard as exaggerated that severe self-restraint in the use of his senses which from his earliest boyhood he imposed upon himself, lest he should incur even the shadow of avoidable danger to the holy virtue. And no doubt it was often sneeringly said of him: "Why is Gonzaga so particular, so prudish, so unwilling to speak of this, or to look at that, or to hear a questionable story told even in jest?" And no doubt there were plenty of well-meaning people who, with no thought of sneering, but simply for lack of a better knowledge of God's ways with His own, advised him to comply more readily with the fashions and conventions of the time, to go more into society, not to shrink so timidly (as it seemed to them) from doing as others did. Surely not all the gaieties of the time were sinful. Why then should he abstain from them? Why should he keep himself shut up in his room, when all the court was open to him? At that rate he would never learn to do credit to his position, or to exercise that authority over his fellow men which was his by right of birth and inheritance. But Aloysius very wisely preferred to listen to the voice of his conscience, and

to the call of God, and to the counsels of his confessor, rather than to the mild and conventional maxims of short-sighted human prudence. And it was indeed well for him that he did so. And for us, too, it is well that he did so; for us who may profit, as so many others before us have profited, by his example. It was unquestionably and immeasurably better that St Aloysius should have gone a little too far—if indeed he did go too far—in the strictness of his guard over his senses, than that he should have tarnished the whiteness of his innocence even by venial sin. Better, as our Lord has told us, to be blind and saved than with the gift of sight unimpaired to be cast into hell. And better, we may add, to close our eyes, of our own free will, against many vain distractions and harmful allurements; better to stop our ears against all manner of foolishness, or worse, that we may the more surely and distinctly hear the voice of conscience; better to be reserved in speech with our fellow men that we may the more freely converse with God; better to do these things, and to walk securely along the clean path by which God Himself will lead us if we are but faithful to His grace; better this than with our eyes wide open, and our ears agape, and our tongue never at rest, to take our own wilful way through the mud and slime of venial offences towards the precipice from which we may so easily fall into deadly sin.

But, that you may be strengthened to make the effort that is needed—and oftentimes nothing short of an heroic effort *is* needed—to keep yourselves pure, to keep not your eyes alone, but your ears and your tongue and your body and your heart

from defilement, O look upon your Saviour as He stands at the pillar of flagellation, offering Himself as a victim in your stead; and hear the savage blows as they descend upon His sacred body, pitiless and undiscerning, till, when the rope that sustained Him is loosened, He sinks exhausted on the ground, as the prophet foresaw Him, marred and disfigured, "a worm and no man, the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." And this for you and for me. O, is not our selfishness, our heedlessness, our miserable softness rebuked; and have we not reason, if we have been guilty in this matter, to hang our heads in shame, and to cry and plead for mercy: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner"?

Nay, shall we not do something more than merely to cry for mercy? Shall we not recognise that this body of ours deserves to be punished, and not only *deserves* to be punished, but *needs* to be chastised and kept in subjection by self-denial, lest, in spite of all our good purposes, its rebellious passions should hurry us into sin? The severe austerities of St Aloysius, and of so many other saints recorded and unrecorded, were none too heavy a price to pay for the boon of a spotless innocence, and of freedom from importunate temptations of the flesh. And if we cannot emulate these austerities, at least let us not think it too much to deny ourselves all manner of vain and foolish and profitless self-indulgence. Self-control and self-denial in any department of life will strengthen our will for the gaining of a victory over those assaults of the enemy, which are at once the most seductive and the most violent of all.

And even though we did not need this self-control and self-denial for the keeping of our bodies in subjection, and for the discipline of the mind, should we not be stirred to some practice of penance by the thought and the contemplation of Jesus our Lord and Master, our best and dearest Friend, as He with such lavish generosity poured forth under those cruel blows His very life-blood for us? This indeed has been the most powerful motive among those which in all ages of the Church have moved the more fervent among the faithful to make of resolute mortification an integral feature in their lives. They have seen that close union with our Lord is the one worthy object of ambition; and that a union with Him which did not involve some share in His cross must needs lack an element which no truly generous heart would forego.

But if it should happen, perchance, that some of us are so incurably selfish as hardly to know what generosity means; if, perchance, some of us would be willing enough that our Lord, or anyone else, should bear the penalty of our sins, provided that we ourselves could escape unscathed; if some of us should be all but incapable of being stirred by any motive but that of fear; it is well to remind ourselves that there is a lesson of fear, as well as a lesson of love, to be learned from the sacred passion of our Saviour. "If they do these things in the green wood," He said Himself to the women of Jerusalem, "what shall be done in the dry?"* The expression is a proverbial one, and its practical meaning for us is, that even the awful torments of the Passion are

* St Luke xxiii. 31.

less, far less, than the everlasting penalty which those must pay, who, despising the Precious Blood of Jesus, and obstinate in their sins, refuse to avail themselves, by a sincere repentance, of the atonement which has been made for them.

And every one of us without exception should take to heart, with special reference to the class of sins which we have been considering, our Lord's warning words: "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." * Pray that such temptations may be kept far from you; and watch, that is to say, guard the gates and the approaches, and vigilantly look to the outworks of the citadel of the heart. "He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins"; but even His wounds and bruises will not avail us if we neglect to do our part to keep ourselves from sinning again.

* St Matt. xxvi. 41.

XXXVIII

THE LOVE OF GOD*

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind."—ST LUKE x. 27 (*cf.* DEUT. vi. 5).

THE Gospel of the Mass for the eighth Sunday after Pentecost sets before us the parable of the Steward who was called to account for having wasted his master's goods. And the parable offers a tempting occasion for recommending you to take an account of yourselves as to the use which you have made—or may have neglected to make—of the opportunities which have been at your disposal during the school year which is now drawing to a close, or, in the case of those who are leaving school, during the whole period of your boyhood.

The same parable may, however, likewise suggest, and has in fact suggested, quite a different line of thought, only slightly connected with the similitude itself. For it should lead one who now for several years past has had some responsibility for your spiritual welfare, to take account of himself in the first instance, as to how he has discharged the trust

* July 14, 1907 (Eighth Sunday after Pentecost).

which has been laid upon him in your regard. This trust, or commission, was that he should spare no pains to lead you, if he might, to the love of our Lord, the attainment of which is, indeed, the one end and purpose of all spiritual training. And as the steward in the parable did his best, after his own fashion, to make up for lost time, so it has seemed to me that the best use to which I could put these last Sunday mornings, or two of them at any rate, would be to take occasion to set before you, more explicitly and plainly, perhaps, than I have hitherto done, the characteristics and conditions of that love of God, and in particular of Christ crucified, with which we all desire, or should desire, that our hearts may be filled.

And the subject may be introduced by stating a difficulty which, in one form or another, must not infrequently have come before every priest who has had any dealings with souls which are even slightly raised above the dull level of contented mediocrity. The difficulty may be put in this form: "Father, my conscience bears me witness that I want to serve God faithfully, and to the best of my ability; but I do not seem to *feel* one scrap of love for our Lord, and I am afraid there must be something amiss with me."

It is a real difficulty, and one that deserves to be most carefully and reverently handled, lest on the one hand a man should be discouraged by imagining a fault where in fact, perhaps, there is no shadow of fault; and lest, on the other hand, by too easily acquiescing in the state of things which has been described, he should, as time goes on, fall far short of that perfection which God asks and expects of him.

Now the plain truth of the matter is this. If a man

keeps the commandments, still more if, at the cost of very considerable effort, he diligently strives to avoid not only grievous sin but likewise all deliberate venial offences; why, then he unquestionably does love our Lord, whether he has any feeling of love or no. The essential element in the love of God is—as we cannot too often remind ourselves—*service.* And service, of a relatively high order, such a man is undoubtedly rendering. And of a much higher order is the service of one who renounces, or is resolved to renounce, all present possessions and all future prospects, in order that he may devote himself, without stint and without reserve, to labour in the interest and for the cause of his Divine Lord and Master. It is quite certain that the question that will be asked of us when we are called on to give an account of our stewardship is not how we have *felt* towards our Lord, but what we have done for Him, what we have tried to do for Him, what we have wished to do for Him, what we have given up for Him, what we have endured for Him; and moreover that the measure of our retribution will be, not the material value of the things we have renounced, or the actual amount of pain or suffering or sorrow which we may have endured, but the fulness and completeness of the sacrifice in relation to our means, our capacities, our opportunities. The widow's mite was more precious in God's eyes than the handsome contributions of the rich Pharisees who made a boast of their alms. And on the other hand it is the wasteful squandering of our Master's goods, the failure to turn our natural gifts and our spiritual capacities to the best account, the neglect of the opportunities that lay within our reach, it is this, and not the lack of devout *feelings*

of love, which will be charged against us at the great reckoning; and it is this that we do well to regret with a hearty sorrow when, at the end of a school year, or at the close of our college course, we very laudably anticipate the divine judgment by taking an account of ourselves before the tribunal of our own conscience.

Nevertheless, while all this is true, and most consoling to men of good will, it is well that we should wish, or rather that we should very ardently desire, to have a conscious sense or feeling of love for our Lord, habitually if possible, and at least from time to time. The case is analogous to that of temptation. There have been great saints who, as we know, have been very grievously tempted; and the remembrance of this fact should encourage us not to be distressed if, without any fault of our own, we too should be severely tempted. Yet at the same time it is most desirable that we should be free from temptation, and therefore we are exhorted to pray with the utmost earnestness that we may be delivered from them, and to take every means in our power to keep them at a distance. So too, there have been great saints who during long periods of time were conscious of no feeling of love for our Lord; and therefore (among other reasons) we must not be distressed if our own experience should be like theirs. And yet it is a thing most earnestly to be desired that we should have this feeling, if only we can come by it. For unless our feelings, as well as our judgment, are enlisted on the right side, there is always a danger lest some strong feeling and inclination of an opposite kind should hurry us away into sin.

Now it is plain that we cannot directly control our

feelings. We cannot feel hot when the weather is cold merely by wishing to do so. And the feeling of love for our Lord, being a divine gift, is still less within our immediate control than those which are merely natural. It is a part of what is known as "divine consolation"; and this it belongs to God alone to give or to withhold. Nevertheless there is much that we can do to dispose ourselves for the gift, in the first place by purging out and expelling from the system whatever is an obstacle to this grace, and in the second place by various positive exercises of virtue and devotion.

For the present it will be well to confine our attention chiefly to the process of purgation. It concerns both the past and the present. It concerns the past, in as much as we must not content ourselves with having confessed our sins and spent a few brief moments in making an act of contrition for them, as though after that they need never be thought of again. In Father Faber's admirable book entitled: *Growth in Holiness*, you will find an excellent chapter on what the author calls: "Abiding sorrow for sin." And in this "abiding sorrow for sin" we must most diligently exercise ourselves if we wish to enjoy the consciousness of a really fervent love of our Lord. Again and again we must bewail and deplore, with a genuine detestation of the will, whatever has been amiss in the past. Again and again we must reproach ourselves with our folly and our ingratitude, with our pride and our self-indulgence, with our wilfulness and waywardness in preferring to listen to the seductive call of our own selfish inclinations, rather than to heed the voice of conscience speaking in our hearts. All

these things have been forgiven, yes; we must have no scruple about that. And yet our cry must be: *Amplius lava me*—"Wash me yet more from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." This persevering exercise of sorrow for past sin will not only secure our more complete cleansing therefrom, but will also serve to establish us in humility, which is one of the most necessary dispositions for the reception of the divine grace of consolation and of the sensible love of our Lord.

We need, moreover, to purge out not merely the offences of the past, but also the inordinate inclinations of the present. No man can expect to love our Lord with a love that he can feel, or consciously experience, unless he is ready to deny himself many gratifications and distractions which, though not in themselves sinful, yet are apt so to take possession of the mind and the heart that there is no room left for the dispositions which he desires. If we make of our imaginations and of our affective faculties a kind of lumber-room in which all manner of rubbish is stored, we cannot expect them to be at the same time like a well-adorned chamber in which we may fitly receive and welcome the Lord and Master of our hearts. We must keep a place for Him, if we desire that He should fill it; and the place that we must keep for Him is not some obscure nook or corner, but the place of honour, to be reserved for Him alone. It may seem that He keeps us waiting, and we may sometimes have occasion very humbly to expostulate with Him, as we might with a merely human friend, that He does not visit us oftener, or stay with us longer; but in the end our fidelity will be more than abundantly

rewarded; and the soul that has faithfully refused to give to any creature the place which belongs to our Lord alone, will sooner or later learn what it is to love Him with a strong and overmastering love.

Self-denial, then, and in particular a strict guard over the senses, the imagination, the affections, and the avoidance of idle words and aimless gossip as distinct from healthful and helpful recreation—all this is a part of the price which we must be prepared to pay for the boon of which we are in search. We must be generous to Him if we wish Him to bestow on us the special favour of a conscious union and intimacy with Him.

Moreover, it is to be remembered that this Lord and Master whom we wish to love with a conscious affection is no mere fair-weather friend, but One who has endured for us the pains and the humiliations of the sacred passion. And if we wish to be closely united with Him, we must not shrink from treading the path which He trod; we must of necessity be willing, nay rather we ought to be eager, to endure the cross with Him. Last week we contemplated together His terrible scourging at the pillar. Shall we see Him scourged for us and not desire—as innumerable fervent souls before us have been moved by that spectacle to desire—in some degree at least to share His sufferings? May God in His great mercy grant to many of us at least the first beginnings, even in boyhood, of that spirit of penance in union with Christ crucified which has in all ages been characteristic of the saints and of all fervent souls, and which has animated so many of them even from early years.

We have been concerned, in this present meditation, with the sterner aspects of the ideal which we have to set before us; with the harder part of the task which we must take upon ourselves if we set out in quest of God's choicer graces, of those *charismata meliora*, those "better gifts" which St Paul bids us emulously to seek.* Yet even in what has been said there should be found many gleams of comfort and of encouragement. We must assiduously deny ourselves, yes; but for the sake of something that is better than ourselves for our own happiness, both temporal and eternal. We must mortify the flesh, yes; but for the sake of the spirit which will endure when the flesh has perished and rotted away. We must quell and subdue our pride, yes; but only that we may escape from the tyrannous domination of a lie into the freedom wherewith the truth will make us free. We must away with the Barabbas, the faithless and seditious traitor, that is within us, yes; but that Christ may be ours. May He indeed be ours, not alone by that right to His eternal possession in heaven which faithful service assures us, but by the bond of conscious union here on earth.

* 1 Cor. xii. 31.

XXXIX

THE LOVE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED*

Haec est generatio quaerentium eum, quarentium faciem Dei Jacob—"This is the generation of them that seek [the Lord], of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob."—Ps. xxiii. 6.

ONCE already, in the course of the last twelve months, we have taken occasion to recall to mind the scene or incident of our Lord's weeping over Jerusalem, which is set before us in to-day's Gospel. The cause or motive of His tears was, as we learn from the Evangelist, that the people of that highly favoured city had not known, in the day of their visitation, the things that were for their peace, which now were hidden from their eyes. And lest we in our turn should be an occasion of sorrow to our Lord's Sacred Heart, we cannot do better than to resume the effort, which we made last week, to dispose our own hearts for the gift of that fervent love of Christ crucified which is the one thing that is most for our peace both in this world and in the next.

The love of Christ crucified. O believe that this transforming and ennobling love, though it be a divine gift, and therefore not ours to command, is

* July 21, 1907 (Ninth Sunday after Pentecost).

yet within the reach of anyone who will dispose himself for it by resolutely carrying out that simple yet comprehensive programme which has so often been set before us, generosity and confidence. There is abundant room for the exercise of generosity in that process of purgation—the purgation of past sin and the purgation of the evil and inordinate inclinations that beset us—which we considered together in the previous meditation. But above all, perhaps, there is room for generosity in the matter of unselfish charity. We have our Lord's own word for it that one of the great surprises of the judgment day will be the discovery that He really meant what He said, when He told us that what we do to our brethren we do unto Him, that kindness shown to them is kindness shown to Him, and that pain needlessly caused to them is pain heedlessly inflicted on Him. We cannot surely expect our Lord to admit us to the intimacy of a sensible and conscious love, so long as we wound Him by our unkindness, or our lack of kindness, to those who are—to say the least—not less dear to Him than ourselves. And on the other hand there is no better and surer means whereby we may fit ourselves to receive His choicest gifts and blessings, than that of self-sacrificing charity.

But indeed this whole subject of unselfish charity and thoughtful kindness is of so high an importance on its own account as to justify a digression, here, from our more immediate subject. *È poco educato*—"His bringing-up has been neglected" is the Roman way of saying, not that a boy, or a youth, is backward in his studies, but that he is rude, boorish, selfish, inconsiderate. And the Roman is right; for the

true aim of all education is to fit a boy for his after life; and in later life it is character, far more than learning, that tells, for all purposes that are really worth considering. And the character of the thoroughly selfish man is a character that, in an essential particular, has lacked its true formation.

You may have read, perhaps, how the great Apostle and Evangelist, St John, in his old age almost wearied his disciples by the constant repetition and reiteration of the lesson of fraternal charity; and how, when they remonstrated with him, he answered that this was the great lesson which, if a man would but learn, he would know enough. The story is probably true, or very near the truth, for St John's first Epistle is full of this lesson, repeated again and again. "In this we have known the charity of God," he says, "that He hath laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall withhold his mercy from him, how doth the charity of God abide in him? My little children, let us love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." * And again: "This is His commandment, that we should love one another." † And again: "Dearly beloved, let us love one another, for charity is of God. . . . He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is charity." ‡ And yet again: "If God hath so loved us, we ought also to love one another. . . . If we love one another, God abideth in us and His love is perfected in us." § And once more: "He

* 1 John iii. 16-18.
† *Ibid.*, iii. 23.
‡ *Ibid.*, iv. 7, 8.
§ *Ibid.*, iv. 11, 12.

that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not." *

Or again, look at the matter from another point of view. The book-market of the present day is flooded with works dealing with social questions of one kind or another—the housing of the poor, the problem of the unemployed, the intolerable hardships of what is known as "sweating," and so forth. And each writer has his own view as to what might and could and should be done by way of remedy. But amid the clash and jangle of conflicting opinions one thing comes out with quite unmistakable clearness, and it is that the root of every social evil is purely and simply selfishness; selfishness even among the poor themselves, but selfishness still more among the middle class and among the rich. And for this selfishness there is no real remedy to be found except in the principles and the maxims of the Gospel.

It is not too much to assert that three-quarters of the relief and rescue work, which in our day is being so laudably and admirably carried out by the charitable, would have been quite unnecessary, if those who are primarily and immediately responsible for the welfare of their dependents were animated by a spirit of Christian charity and unselfishness. That legislation on social questions is urgently needed, no man who has given any serious attention to the subject can doubt. Nevertheless it remains true that no legislation, however wise and statesmanlike, can put to rights more than a small fraction of the evils that are eating like a cancer at the heart of our modern

* 1 John iv. 20.

civilisation. Selfishness is a match for any law, and will always find means to evade it. And as selfishness is at the root of all our modern social evils, so, if any one of us should cherish the laudable ambition of some day doing something to remedy them, the very first task to which he must address himself is that of schooling his own character to a consistent and persevering practice of unselfishness, after the pattern of our Divine Master and Model.

In speaking of unselfishness, of charity, of kindness, I am, then, looking far beyond these transient days of your school life. But at the same time, while we look forward to the future, we must not forget that our preparation for the future must be made in the present. Practice charity and thoughtful kindness now; learn to think less of yourselves and more of others now; and you will give good hopes for the time to come. Neglect the matter now, and your whole life hereafter, both in this world and in the next, will suffer from your present heedlessness.

Therefore, in view more especially of the holidays which are drawing near, let us recall to mind some simple rules or principles of conduct, which, when observed and put into practice for our Lord's sake are an exercise of the great virtue of charity. (1) Try to foresee the reasonable wishes of your parents and elders, and do what you know or believe that they would wish you to do without waiting to be asked. (2) When you are asked to do something, do it as promptly as you can. Do not put anyone to the pain of having to ask several times, or to beg from you, as a favour, what a little generosity would make you glad to do at the first sign of another's wish. (3) Remember

that all this involves thoughtfulness. For in fact thoughtfulness and considerateness for others is an integral part of kindness; nay it is its inmost part or soul; while on the other hand, thoughtlessness or forgetfulness where others are concerned implies a selfish disposition, and often produces many of the evil effects of real unkindness.

In all this you will find no great difficulty if only you will believe, or better still if you will learn by your own experience, that it is possible to find happiness in making others happy; and if you will bear in mind that on the other side of the grave you will find our Lord Himself waiting to welcome you, and to thank you, with all the measureless gratitude of His Sacred Heart, for every least act of kindness that you have done for His sake.

And this last thought may fitly bring us back to the topic of divine consolation and of the conscious love of our Lord. One of the reasons why we do not love our Lord more fervently than we do may be, perhaps, that His generosity to us does not, as the phrase goes, "appeal to us." And this again may sometimes be a result of our own selfishness. A selfish and self-indulgent man is not easily moved by generosity and self-sacrifice on the part of others. But once let him begin to be thoroughly generous in his service of our Lord and of his fellow men for our Lord's sake, and he will begin to understand and appreciate our Lord's generosity to himself. Once let him begin to take a little serious trouble to give pleasure to others, to find a part of his happiness in making others happy, and he will begin to understand, in some degree at least, the divine loving-

kindness of our Lord towards His wayward and ungrateful creatures. And the greater the progress which he makes in thoughtful and generous kindness to others, the kindness which anticipates the wishes of others or hastens to fulfil them when expressed, the greater, speaking generally, will be his sense of the charity of Christ Jesus our Lord.

But after all we must remember that the love of our Lord cannot, under ordinary circumstances, take possession of the emotional part of our being, cannot become a strong feeling within us, except through the apprehension of the understanding. We must know our Lord well if we would love Him fervently. And again, if we would diligently strive to attain to this knowledge and love, we must convince ourselves that they are worth striving for, that they are the pearl of great price for which a sacrifice must be made, and for which no sacrifice can be too great. The true love of our Lord is called by theologians a love of "appreciation," that is to say, a love which *values* its object above all others, and which is therefore ready to set everything else aside for the sake of that object. We must then again and again inculcate upon ourselves the plain and common-sense truth that the love and service of Christ is the one thing that counts, and that nothing else is of any serious importance except in relation to it. And here we may help ourselves by means of a simple illustration, and of some words from St Paul's Epistles.

We are very rightly interested, at the present time, in all that concerns our public examinations. And unquestionably we are doing what is very pleasing to God in putting forth our best endeavours on such

an occasion, for the simple reason that it is His will that we should do so. At the same time we cannot too often remind ourselves, even in the moment of success, that in the next world it is not success that will count. We cannot take our prizes with us beyond the grave. Even the records of them will be deleted; or rather, the records that will survive will be records of effort, of motive, of intention, not of results achieved. It is the determination of the will to serve and please our Lord, and what we deliberately think and say and do in accordance with this determination, that will alone be reckoned to our credit. What we do simply to please ourselves is pure loss; what we do to please Him is pure gain. Success, except in so far as it serves to encourage us, is a negligible quantity.

I lay stress on this point because, when we read of St Aloysius, for instance, despising the honours and riches and pleasures of this world for our Lord's sake, we sometimes too readily fancy that this was for him an easy matter. Now it is easy to despise, or to persuade ourselves that we despise, what is not within our reach, a dukedom for instance, or an income of ten thousand a year. What is by no means so easy is to despise the things that we have, or the things that we have only to stretch out our hand to grasp. It is not easy for a rich man to despise wealth, or for a successful man to despise success, or for a learned and accomplished man to despise learning and accomplishments. And yet all these things deserve to be despised in so far as we might be tempted to value them for their own sake, or to weigh them against the love and service

of our Lord; as though they could be regarded as a sort of compensation for spiritual losses, or to look upon them in any other light than as means to the one great end which we all ought to have in view.

It was no lack of human knowledge and secular learning which caused St Paul to write: "Brethren, I count myself to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified."* It was not that he had no other knowledge, but that, by comparison, it simply did not count. On the other hand, if he had lacked the knowledge—the practical and the intimate knowledge, the knowledge which issued in his strong and dominant love—of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, his ministry would deservedly have been a failure. "The things that were gain to me," says the Apostle elsewhere, "the same I have counted loss for Christ. Yea more, I count all things to be but loss, for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as filthy refuse (*ut stercora*) that I may gain Christ."† These are strong words, and they deserve our closest attention. You will notice that the great Apostle not only reckons all that the world has to offer as mere "rot" (to use our own expressive phrase); but he counts the possession of these things as a positive "loss." Not as though in themselves they were evil or injurious, but because they are so apt to stand in the way of what alone deserves to be counted as gain; because in the rush and struggle of life the things of the body and the things of the mind are so apt to elbow out the things of the soul, and to relegate them

* 1 Cor. ii. 2. † Phil. iii. 7, 8.

to a secondary place in our esteem; because they are so apt to absorb our attention, our interest, our energies, our labour, at the cost of the one supreme end and aim of life for which everything is to be sacrificed. Such is the true Christian view of life; such is especially the view of life which every priest, as such, must take, and which, if he is true to his trust, he will spare no pains to inculcate on those who are under his charge, or whom it may be his good fortune to influence by word or example.

If only we will consistently and perseveringly act up to this view of life, so plainly set before us by St Paul, if only we will be resolutely determined to put Christ crucified above and before all things, and never again, for the sake of any created good, whether material or intellectual or social or political, to miss any point of perfection in His service that may be within our reach; then, sooner than we might have expected, we shall attain to that strong, passionate, all-absorbing and over-mastering love of the One Man who alone is worthy of all our heart's loyalty, which is the best and most perfect fruit of a truly Christian education. May it be truly said of you in the words of the Psalm which were quoted at the outset: "This is the generation of them that seek the Lord, of them that seek the face of the God of Jacob." O may you indeed see His face so far as this is allowed to anyone in this time of trial and probation. O may you indeed taste of His consolations. O may you indeed feel your hearts aglow with His love. "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

XL

OF A PLATFORM, A SUBWAY, AND A THROUGH TICKET*

"But the publican stood afar off, and would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast, saying: O God, be merciful to me, a sinner."—ST LUKE xviii. 13.†

OF all the means whereby we may dispose ourselves for the divine gift of a fervent and conscious love of our Lord, the most efficacious, beyond all comparison, is prayer. And of the dispositions with which we should pray, one of the most indispensable, as we have more than once been reminded, is humility. And of the constituent parts of humility, or motives for humility, not the least important is contrition for sin, and in particular the disposition of shame and compunction. The topic of abiding sorrow for sin is one that has already engaged our attention not long since; but for our souls' welfare we shall do well to take occasion from to-day's Gospel to dwell in it once more. It is not enough that we should entertain a great and genuine horror of sin in itself, though that is, of course, most desirable; but we must cultivate a

* July 28, 1907 (Tenth Sunday after Pentecost).

† From the Gospel of the day.

thorough and sincere detestation of our own sins in particular, and a real shame for them. The publican, it is plain, was genuinely ashamed of himself; for he not only declared himself a sinner, as a man might do with a comfortable assurance that he was no worse than his neighbours who were likewise sinners, but he stood afar off, as unworthy to enter the temple, and struck his breast, and would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven. And we too, assuming that we have sinned, must begin by being thoroughly ashamed of ourselves, if we wish to make any notable progress in the spiritual life, and especially if we wish to attain to the conscious and sensible love of our Lord.

The matter may be illustrated by means of a similitude suitable to our present circumstances. When you are starting on a long journey, it is manifestly important to make sure that you are on the right platform and that you have the right ticket. Now, within a few days, some of you will be starting on the long journey of life; and others, at this season, may well look forward to the time when they too will be doing the same. And to all such I would say: Make sure that you are on the right spiritual platform, and that you have a through ticket. If your habitual disposition is that of self-contentment and self-satisfaction,—the disposition against which the parable of the Pharisee and the publican is explicitly directed,—if your ticket is marked: "I'm all right, there's nothing the matter with me"; then certainly you are on the wrong platform, and the sooner you get your ticket exchanged the better. You are on the cheap excursion platform, with the crowd; and at the best you will get no further than

Middlington, the populous city of mediocrity. You ought to be on the main line platform, with a through ticket to Jerusalem, the city of the Vision of Peace, bearing the inscription: *In te, Domine, speravi*—"In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped"; or: *Adjutorium nostrum in nomine Domini*—"Our help is in the name of the Lord"; or some other words which signify that we put no trust in our own puny strength.

Now if, in the station at Blackburn, you were to find yourself on the wrong platform, and wanted to get to the right one, you would be directed to go by the subway; and you would likewise find the long-distance booking-office down below. And so you must do if you would make a thoroughly satisfactory life's journey, without needless changes, and shuntings, and delays. You must go down by the steps of humility to the low level of shame and compunction for the sins of your boyhood, and when you have there sincerely and not perfunctorily exercised yourselves in heartfelt contrition, you must go up by the steps of generosity to the platform of unbounded confidence in God alone; and then you will be right for your journey.

Confidence in God is a very different thing from self-confidence and self-satisfaction, even though, superficially, they may look very much alike; just as the excursion platform and the main line platform in a railway station look very much alike. And to a thorough confidence in God we shall never attain, unless we first get down to that distrust of self which is the fruit of sorrow for our faithlessness. Never mind the cheap excursion crowd. Never mind about what "everybody else" may do or say. Do not measure

yourself by your neighbour, or say to yourself that you are "all right" because you are as good as he. "Everybody else" did not die for you on the cross. "Everybody else" will not stand by you at the judgment, nor will your case be decided by comparison with theirs. Leave "everybody else" alone, and transact your soul's business with God and your confessor. And if you have anything on your conscience that makes you uneasy, or should make you uneasy, clear it all up before you go away for the holidays; more especially if you are leaving school altogether.

Go down, as was said just now, to the subway of shame and compunction. It is what St Aloysius did before you. At the very root of his saintliness lay his deep and lasting contrition for the venial faults of his early childhood. He did not say to himself that they were only venial, or that they happened a long time ago, and that there was no need to make a fuss about them. He knew well that it is a sad thing and a very dangerous thing to be false to one's conscience and unfaithful to God's grace, even in small matters. He knew well that, if God had not held out a helping hand to save him, these small faults might easily have become habitual, and might have led to greater ones; he knew, too, that every fault that we commit makes its mark on our character, and predisposes us to the danger of falling again, and more gravely, as we grow older. And therefore he deplored the faults of his childhood, with heartfelt sorrow, to the end of his life.

And his example those of us more especially who are leaving school will do well to follow, during these

last days, as the very best immediate preparation for our life's journey. Shame and compunction for the sins and faults of our school life. It is a bitter potion, but very bracing to the system. Shame and compunction. Do not mince matters; but look the facts fairly and squarely in the face. For indeed we have abundant reason to be ashamed if we have offended God by deliberate sin, even though it were only by deliberate venial sin, more especially if it has been often repeated. But much more if your sins have been grievous as well as numerous. If, for instance, you have sinned against the holy virtue of purity; if you have allowed your lower nature to get the better of you, to cloud your understanding, to weaken your will, to deaden your conscience, to lull you in a false security, you have in plain and unvarnished language behaved worse than the brute beasts. For they only follow their natural instincts, while you have obeyed the promptings of the flesh in preference to the voice of conscience and the call of God's grace. You have, moreover, been a fool to prefer the vile pleasure of a moment to the eternal joys that are promised to those who are faithful; a fool in preferring the seductive allurements of your worst enemy to the counsels and warnings of your true soul's friend; and you have been ungrateful and unmannerly in deliberately turning your back, were it but for a moment, on God who created you, on Jesus who died for you, on Mary your Queen and your Mother, for the sake of a swinish gratification. And if by God's mercy you have been preserved from sins such as these, yet you have been, perhaps, a fool in your pride, in your self-will, in your self-indulgence, in

your slackness in prayer, in your rashness and heedlessness as regards the dangerous occasions of sin, in your harshness and want of charity to others; by all which faults, or any of them, you might well have forfeited those special graces which have kept you, thank God, from more serious offences.

Let us all, then, here and now, renew our sorrow for the sins and faults of our school life; and in our visits to the chapel, or at other times, during this next few days, let us repeatedly say from our hearts, with deep and heartfelt shame and sorrow: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

This, it would seem, was the publican's habitual prayer, just as contrition for the past was an habitual disposition with our holy patron St Aloysius. And yet I do not venture to recommend this as our most constant ejaculation through life; for to some of us it might prove too depressing, and unsuited to our age and natural character. But once more I would most earnestly commend to you the use of short ejaculatory prayers repeated again and again throughout the day. It is not, indeed, to be expected that all should heed these words; but if even a few of us will courageously and perseveringly make the effort, we shall find that the practice will little by little transform our lives till we shall wonder how we could have lived so long without that sensible love of our Lord which it will surely bring to us. If we diligently and perseveringly exercise ourselves, for instance, in acts of gratitude, not forgetting to thank God for pleasant things and forcing ourselves to thank Him for crosses, we shall gradually come to feel ourselves more and more under His providence,

and to see in every event and incident of our lives some fresh mark of His love. If again we accustom ourselves frequently to offer our actions to Him in the course of the day, and to direct our attention more carefully to His better service, we shall soon begin to hear more clearly and more surely the voice of our conscience urging us to do this as more pleasing to Him, and warning us to avoid that as less perfect even though not actually sinful. And thus we shall come by insensible degrees to feel ourselves more in touch with God. We shall come to feel that the conversation is not all on one side; that He is speaking to us as well as we to Him. And this sense of being in close touch with our Lord must sooner or later engender the sense of love for Him.

But of all ejaculations the one which I would most strongly recommend to you is the shortest and perhaps the best of all, just the Holy Name of Jesus repeated again and again. Try it, and you will experience the truth of what I say. When you make a short visit to the Blessed Sacrament, take out your beads and repeat the Holy Name in place of the Hail Mary through one, or three, or five decades. "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, object of my faith; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, foundation of my hope; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, my heart's love; Jesus, I believe in Thee, I hope in Thee, I love Thee. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, I have sinned against Thee; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, I have preferred creatures to Thee; Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, I have preferred myself to Thee; O Jesus, may I never sin again." If you will do this often in church or chapel you will soon learn to do it at other times also, till your whole life will become a sort of "Jesus

Psalter," and the dominant disposition of your soul will be that of the pilgrim in Walter Hilton's *Scale of Perfection*, the constant cry of whose heart was: "I am nothing, I have nothing, and I covet nothing save one thing alone—the love of Jesus." For it will gradually dawn upon you that our Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the one Man who is worthy of the unreserved love and loyalty of our hearts; that His work is the one Work which is worthy of a man's unstinted self-devotion; and that the way which He chose, the Way of the Cross, is the noblest and the best. And so, whether your love for Him be accompanied with sensible sweetness or no, it will have the far more valuable character of strength; it will be the strong and manly love of a man for a Man; an emotion not tender perhaps but powerful, a very passion of enthusiastic loyalty, a resolute determination of the will to overcome all obstacles that stand in the way; it will include a hatred and detestation, a loathing and contempt for anything that could keep you from Him; and an overmastering desire to draw others also to His love and service. And if only you will persevere, some of you at least will learn, some day, what it is to be absorbed in God and in love with our Lord; you will learn at last what St Paul meant when he wrote: "Your life is hidden with Christ, in God";* and again: "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."† O Jesus, fill our hearts with Thy love!

* Col. iii. 3. † Gal. ii. 20.

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